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Key Concepts in Musical Performance: Practice, Performance, Interpretation

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Abstract

This study, speculative, theoretical and interdisciplinary in orientation, examines some key concepts employed in the field of musical performance, primarily but not exclusively as exemplified by pianistic practice and solo piano performance. It is organised as a series of essays, each of which concerns itself with a central term. The introductory chapter interleaves discussion of theoretical issues (including the nature of theory itself) with reviews of exemplary recent studies which approach the topic of performance from different perspectives, such as the rigorously analytical or the institutional. It concludes that this range of materials and perspectives is both symptom and cause of fragmentation in music-academic performance studies. The four subsequent chapters both diagnose and confirm this state of affairs in more detail, dealing in turn with the notions of the practice, performance and interpretation. In a final concluding section, these strands are reviewed and supplemented. The essay on the practice details origins and recent usage in musicology before turning to a particular theory of the practice proposed by Alasdair Macintyre. It examines the interaction of musical performance and ethics in the guise of virtue theory, concluding with two case studies (on memorisation and competitions). The diversity of definitions of performance across different disciplines is the subject of the following chapter. It argues that musical performance has an ontologically distinctive processual character, whose fluidity is contained (or 'framed') at different levels. The essay on interpretation treats this concept contrastively. Interpretation is viewed as a stored mental product, a representation akin in important respects to other musical representations, such as notation or recording. The conclusion re-examines the notion of crisis in relation to art music performance. Alongside tentative conclusions, some new materials (relating to musicianship and musicality) are discussed.

Acknowledgements

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Author's Declaration

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the Regulations of the University of Bristol. The work is original except where indicated by special reference in the text and no part of the dissertation has been submitted for any other degree.
Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University of Bristol.
The dissertation has not been presented to any other University for examination either in the United Kingdom or overseas.

Signed: 

Date: 4. June 2001

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Chapter One: Topics and Approaches in Performance Studies: a Brief Introduction to the Literature

Within the discipline of musicology there is a growing field called performance studies. This dissertation is a contribution to it. Two questions immediately arise: what kind of activity is performance, and what significant contributions have been made to the study of it?

The first thing to be said is that the discipline of performance studies per se is most closely associated not with music but primarily with the theatre and what has emerged out of performance art and happenings. Typically, attention in these fields has been paid to the issues of gender, politics, boundary experience and testing received ideas of what art can be.[1] The term performance studies when applied to music – or at least when used by musicologists – refers to a rather diffuse mixture of musical subdisciplines, approaches and concerns. While the study of performance has a long history in criticism and pedagogy, it has in recent decades gained impetus from the historical authenticity movement.[2] The question the historical authenticists posed was roughly this: if we are to accept that the score does not provide sufficient information for an authentic performance of music, what other information could be deemed relevant? Serious academic argument, sometimes overheated, eventually produced a consensus of sorts, that the issue of correct, 'authentic' interpretation and performance was complex and not immediately resolvable. Where there was some agreement was in acknowledging, following Richard Taruskin, that the role of the performer had been undervalued, underexamined and

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[1] A useful overview of the field is provided by Marvin Carlson's *Performance: a Critical Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1996). This study is referred to at greater length in chapter three. On performance art RoseLee Goldberg's *Performance Art: from Futurism to the Present* (London: Thames and Hudson, Second Edition 1988) is a seminal text. *The Twentieth Century Performance Reader*, edited by Michael Huxley and Noel Witts (London: Routledge, 1996) provides a wide-ranging interdisciplinary selection of texts.

[2] The history of the authenticity movement has been traced by Harry Haskell in *The Early Music Revival: a History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988) and Howard Mayer Brown, 'Pedantry or Liberation? A sketch of the Historical Performance Movement', in *Authenticity and Early Music*, ed. Nicholas Kenyon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

undertheorised.[3] Old issues were raised with a fresh urgency and new questions came to be asked. What exactly do performers do and how do they come to do it? Is performing an activity underpinned by a thoroughgoing rationale, or a merely subjective heuristic? What of other factors, such as risk, or audience behaviour?

These questions have begun to be asked more systematically, but in this introduction I wish to look briefly at just a handful of attempts to come to grips with the role of performers and performance. The field of writing that is at least tangentially relevant is vast, of course. The whole raft of pedagogical treatises, biographical studies, memoirs of great performers, critical reviews and journalism – the net can be cast impossibly far and wide – clamours for attention and smaller portions of it could indeed form the basis for a rather differently focused academic study than this one. My emphasis will be theoretical, the mode speculative. I have narrowed the subject matter to pianistic practice, which has both advantages and drawbacks. One argument in its favour is that it poses the theoretical problems in a particularly pure form and can serve as a paradigm case for performers in general.[4] On the other hand, there may indeed be compelling reasons not to generalise from the pianist to, for example, the conductor or orchestral player.[5] This is an issue I will have to put to one side. In any case, pianism provides me with a convenient framework, skeletal rather than substantial, for a discussion of conceptual issues.

Inevitably, then, I am forced to be ruthlessly selective in what follows. In this opening chapter I have chosen to examine a cross-section of texts on performance. Most date from the recent past. They include an exemplary study from the field of piano pedagogy; a doctoral thesis on a closely related topic, written roughly twenty years ago; and a selection of texts which hint at the

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[3] The key collection of texts is Kenyon, *Authenticity and Early Music*. Richard Taruskin's writings on this topic are collected in *Text and Act: Essays on Music and Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

[4] See Stan Godlovitch, *Musical Performance: A Philosophical Study* (London: Routledge, 1998), p.12, and John Lazarus, 'Rethinking the Concert: A Fresh Approach to the Solo Instrumental Recital' (unpublished doctoral thesis, York University, 1978), p.2, for a similar rationale.

[5] For discussion of this issue, see Edward T. Cone, *The Composer's Voice* (Los Angeles: Berkeley, 1974) and Carl Dahlhaus, 'Der Dirigent als Statthalter', *Melos/Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, 2 (1976), p.370-371.

variety of approaches to be found in more recent writing. The texts I have chosen to discuss will hopefully capture something of the range of flavours available in discourse on performance.

My point of departure is, however, methodological. Given that this research does not concern itself with data collection and analysis, but rather with the nature of concepts surrounding and informing performance studies, my initial move will be to consider the genre of 'theory'.

Theory

As George Steiner points out, the history of the word theory displays elements of duality which suggest on occasion self-contradiction.[6] He notes in a brief historical sketch that an earlier meaning (not of course the 'original' meaning) of the word was tied to close unflinching observation.[7]

> Theory is inhabited by truth when it contemplates its object unwaveringly and when, in the observant process of such contemplation, it beholds, it takes grasp of the often confused and contingent ('vulgar') images, associations, suggestions, possibly erroneous, to which the object gives rise.[8]

Something of this earlier sense has been resurrected in recent usage, as we shall see.

In the meantime, however (Steiner dates this from the mid-seventeenth century), another meaning of theory has emerged which now overshadows the former. This is the sense in which the word is applied to science: the devising of speculative but testable hypotheses which cohere and mutually reinforce. This scientific sense of theory was elaborated on by (among others) Descartes, Kant, and Karl Popper, who pared down scientific method to a dependency on the

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[6] George Steiner, *Real Presences* (London: Faber and Faber, 1989), p.70.
[7] 'I have true theory of death when I contemplate a skull.' Sir Thomas Browne, quoted in Steiner, *Real Presences*, p.69.
[8] Ibid, p.69.

core concept of falsifiability.[9] Steiner's argument is that theory in this sense can only in very limited ways and on very few occasions find application in literature and the arts. (The kind of exceptions he allows are 'structuralist' analyses following Saussure, the Russian Formalists and Jakobson.[10].) Notably he allows music theory an exceptional status as the 'complex and intermediary case'.[11] Music theory is an established discourse of antiquarian origin, and 'theory' in music is indeed a rather different genre.[12] More generally, when we encounter theorising in the discourse of the arts, what we are dealing with is not a series of testable hypotheses with potentially predictive power, but a description of what has already occurred.[13] Where Steiner objects to theorising is in the arena of meaning, which he wishes to render immune from functional explanations:

> The absolutely decisive failing occurs when such approaches seek to formalise *meaning*, when they proceed upwards from the phonetic, the lexical and the grammatic to the semantic and aesthetic.[14]

His reason for denying the validity of functional, or what might better be called 'reductive' explanations rests on a particular ontology of art he wishes to defend, underpinning the overall argument of the book, which is that human creative activity is mimetic of God's creations. Steiner's ontology of art is

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[9] A standard introduction to Popper's work is Bryan Magee, *Popper* (London: Fontana, 1973), in which the second chapter deals with the issue of scientific method. Of the numerous primary sources, Popper's essay 'Truth, Rationality, and the Growth of Scientific Knowledge', in Karl Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), p.215-250, is exemplary.

[10] Steiner, *Real Presences,* p.80-81. Steiner mentions Barthes's study S/Z as a successful recent example of such 'scientific' literary-theoretical writing.

[11] Ibid, p.75.

[12] A sample of recent thought in the field is to be found in *Theory, Analysis and Meaning in Music*, ed. Anthony Pople (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

[13] Steiner, *Real Presences*, p.77.

[14] Ibid, p.81. Steiner, in addition to voicing this anti-reductionist stance, proposes that we think of meaning as a 'trace'. Arguments about the application and acceptability of reductionism are widespread across both the sciences and the arts. A clear example from the field of science is Jerry Fodor's review of Stephen Pinker: *How the Mind Works* and Henry Plotkin: *Evolution in Mind*, entitled 'The Trouble with Psychological Darwinism', in *London Review of Books*, January 22, 1998, p.11-13. See also David Barnett, *The Performance of Music: A Study in Terms of the Pianoforte* (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1972), p.11, for a similar argument with similar consequences. (This book is discussed in some detail below.)

presented as a definition, poetically rather than analytically formulated, in tune with its underlying – or rather, proliferating – message: 'I would define literature (art, music) as the maximalisation of semantic incommensurability in respect of the formal means of expression.'[15] If function is taken to be the intentional linking of causes to effects, then clearly this is as far removed from a functional definition of art as possible, a harking back to nineteenth-century art-religion, 'art for art's sake'.

Yet how are we to classify an essay such as Steiner's? It is certainly critical, but is it criticism? It is perhaps precisely the kind of theorising which Steiner himself rails against in the opening pages of *Real Presences*, where he proposes as a thought experiment the prohibition of secondary texts. Jonathan Culler would be happy on his part to include Steiner's work under the umbrella term theory. Generically, it belongs to that body of work which Richard Rorty describes as follows:

> Beginning in the days of Goethe and Macaulay and Carlyle and Emerson, a new kind of writing has developed which is neither the evaluation of the relative merits of literary productions, nor intellectual history, nor moral philosophy, nor social prophecy, but all of these mingled together in a new genre.[16]

Culler also makes the Steinerian distinction between senses of theory (as testable proposition versus speculation) and makes it clear that the kind of theorising engaged in in the humanities – call it 'critical' or 'literary' – is of the speculative kind. His brief discussion of examples of theorising draws attention to two key ideas, which might be crudely described as the constructive mapping of reality through the coining of new words, or redefining of older ones, and their systematic application in discourses. His examples here are Foucault's analyses of sex and homosexuality and the drawing out of patterns of thought by Derrida, such as the 'logic of supplementarity', or that 'the idea of the original is created by the copies, and that the original is always deferred – never to be

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[15] Steiner, *Real Presences*, p.83.

[16] Rorty is quoted by Jonathan Culler in *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1997), p.3. Such writing might be termed 'higher criticism'.

grasped'.[17] The structure of the research I present here is on one level the result of posing a typical 'theory' question: what does x (performance, interpretation, musicianship) mean? Or following Foucault's genealogical approach, how has it come to mean x? A complementary question I pursue depends on definition. If x means (definition), what are the consequences of this? We have seen Steiner's move to define art and how this ties in with a certain distaste for theory. (It is arguably also predicated on a conservative theory of the canon.) Here, then, is Culler's commentary (he does not award it definition status) on what theory is. Notice how Culler, in this introductory text, avoids the poetic voice of Steiner, or the complexifying mode of, say, Eagleton or Jameson:

> 1. Theory is interdisciplinary – discourse with effects outside the original discipline.
> 2. Theory is analytical and speculative – an attempt to work out what is involved in what we call sex or language or writing or meaning or the subject.
> 3. Theory is a critique of common sense, of concepts taken as natural.
> 4. Theory is reflexive, thinking about thinking, enquiry into the categories we use to make sense of things, in literature and in other discursive practices.[18]

To this he adds that 'theory is intimidating', because it is endless, driven by cycles of upstaging and eclipse. Culler's emphasis on how theory derails common sense assumptions constantly points towards *how* texts mean, or their function in creating a certain sense of reality, or constructing a subjectivity. His contention that the theorists you will want to read – or feel able to forget – will 'depend on who "you" are and who you want to be'[19] is one which Nicholas Cook, whose work will be the subject of discussion on several occasions, endorses in his theorising about music.

As points 1-4 of Culler's commentary suggest, theorising performance is no easy matter. Before proceeding with my own theorising, let me review some other attempts to do so.

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[17] Culler, *Literary Theory*, p.12.
[18] Ibid, p.15.
[19] Ibid, p.16.

Review: (1) Pedagogy meets Performance Theory

The pedagogical treatise is a more elusive genre than initial appearance suggests. Is the performer to study the treatise merely in order to perfect a skill? To learn to play (more) beautifully? To interpret notation accurately? To supplement the inadequacies of notation? Or to acquire 'tricks of the trade'? Although pedagogical works typically concern themselves with how to achieve a desired effect, they may or may not bolster this with systematic argument on the effect's behalf.

David Barnett's book entitled *The Performance of Music*, published in 1972, tackles both the how and why of interpretation and is aimed at both a lay and a professional audience including 'students of psychology, philosophy and aesthetics'.[20] Yet I think it would be fair to attribute to it a primarily pedagogical purpose: it never deviates far from the question of how to play the piano. (Barnett himself was a solo pianist and academic.) The purpose of the book is 'to inquire into the intricate relationships among the three modes of participating in musical experience' and Barnett adds that 'while there is indeed an order of priority... all three are equally important.'[21] What he seems to mean by an order of priority – his view is not quite clearly expressed – is at first blush apparently not a hierarchy, as this misleadingly suggests, but that the natural sequence of events is fixed in the order composer-performer-listener. Barnett claims that performance requires fresh attention. He suggests that the reputation of the performer worsened significantly in the inter-war years, quoting a glowing review of Paderewski's playing from early in the century and contrasting it with these later grudging remarks by Hindemith: 'Once we accept the performer as an inevitable necessity in spite of his basic dubiousness, we may as well try to determine what properties make him estimable.'[22]

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[20] Barnett, David, *The Performance of Music: A Study in Terms of the Pianoforte* (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1972). The quotation is from the dust jacket notes.

[21] Barnett, *The Performance of Music*, p.2.

[22] Ibid, p.4. Barnett quotes from Paul Hindemith, *A Composer's World*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1952), p.133. See also the remarks of Barnett's teacher Marc Pincherle quoted on p.224 (endnote 8), who seems to have been influential here. Pincherle

Barnett's story of the performer's loss of status entails a corresponding rise in the fortunes of the historical musicologist, who audited a performance for its authenticity, the music psychologist, who set about demystifying technique and presentation and, later, the analyst, who claimed a determining role for structure in performance. He clearly abhors the narrow concentration on skill acquisition and problem-solving this implies. When Barnett says that 'the deference to the composer was forced and self-conscious and resulted in a substitution of artificial effect for natural expression' he echoes Adorno's comments on Toscanini, though without invoking a central plank of his argument: the fetishisation of detail which access to recordings encourages.[23]

Barnett's definition of performance makes a decisive Steinerian move:

> Musical performance, then, is an effort, an attempt by one or more players to interpret the musical composition on the basis of its script or score. A performance is not the score but simply one idea of it. Since no two performances are alike, there are as many ideas of the score as there are performances.[24]

From this it follows that it is 'important for each listener to form his own opinion', and we can take the performer to be a special instance of the listener here.[25] Unfortunately, Barnett does not follow this line of inquiry further. In other words, performance is a celebration of semantic incommensurability – different performers seeing different and potentially contradictory things in the same music – and the point of a performance, ethically speaking, is the celebration of individual difference, of individuality. Not even the composer who performs his own works (such as Rachmaninoff) can claim special status: 'It is the possibility of finding new meanings in works of the past that makes

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wrote at length on this subject in *The World of the Virtuoso*, trans. Brockway (London: Victor Gollancz, 1964).

[23] Barnett, *The Performance of Music*, p.5 (quotation). Theodor W. Adorno, 'On the Fetish Character of Music and the Regression of Listening' (1938), in *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, ed. Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt (New York: Urizen Books, 1978), p.270-299.

[24] Barnett, *The Performance of Music*, p.10.

[25] Barnett, *The Performance of Music*, p.11. His example is of Wagner's varied reactions to Beethoven's Ninth symphony on different occasions.

them a heritage.'[26] In other words. this is a justification for a work's inclusion in the canon. To this definition Barnett adds a second: notation is 'the art of detailing the process of composition in written symbols'.[27] his point being that notation is never merely a set of bare instructions, because each element in the system is multivalent. This nicely parallels Steiner's point that 'a sentence is always more' (than the sum of its constituents).[28]

The bulk of Barnett's enterprise is consumed in countering the radical relativism that all this implies, the implication that all performances are equally plausible. In Steiner's terms, then, he has to examine the constraints the 'formal means of expression' impose. This he does by breaking down the performer's task into three elements, each of which is always evident in performance. (In passing he makes an important distinction between performance and mere playing.[29]) This analysis is rather cumbersomely entitled 'Performance as the Synthesis of Categories of Method'. The categories are (1) knowledge of musical context; (2) training in structural analysis; and (3) muscular control of the instrument.[30] For each of these areas, he selects what he regards as a key figure and proceeds to describe their partial contribution to the synthesis. So, in reverse order he presents the work of Tobias Matthay (1858-1945) on technique, Alfred Cortot (1877-1963) on context and Heinrich Schenker (1868-1935) on harmonic/voice-leading analysis, an interestingly varied (by nationality) choice of near contemporaries whose work straddles the era of late Romanticism and early Modernism.

The implicit contradiction between the idea of a central purpose in a composition – something that can be discovered by analysis – and the need to allow each individual performer a personal approach sets up a tension which Barnett is constantly at pains to resolve.[31] An early point of confrontation is his discussion of the 'canon of appropriateness', where a performer's choices are

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[26] Ibid, p.11.
[27] Ibid, p.12.
[28] Steiner, *Real Presences,* p.82.
[29] Barnett, *The Performance of Music,* p.22.
[30] Ibid, p.29-54.
[31] Ibid. The idea of the 'central purpose' is discussed on p.19. This is an idea with wide resonance. For a strikingly similar formulation, see Jonathan Dunsby's discussion of Rachmaninoff's concept of 'culmination' in *Performing Music: Shared Concerns* (Oxford:

compared to a chess player's: obedient to rules but driven by a need to succeed, to 'win'. However, performance is not a game (or at least, not a zero-sum game) and there are no laws, winners or even moves, in the clear-cut sense of irrevocable, recordable events such as those that make up chess. This discussion is embedded in a passage which attempts to elucidate the relationship between music and life, which Barnett includes on the grounds that 'context' is only allowable as a contribution to performance insofar as it is demonstrably related to music. The solution for Barnett is that 'the two worlds are related because both undergo selection and arrangement according to the same principle', this being the sense of *appropriateness*.[32]

> [Man] neither requires nor desires from music representation of the actual world. He looks to music for an orderly, non-contradictory arrangement according to the canon of appropriateness. Thus, context in music does not refer to the actual world but to the orderly arrangements that are suggested to man by the actual world. They become possible in music because its materials lend themselves readily to the detection of similarity and contrast.[33]

A number of assumptions are being made here that are open to question. Is there really a 'central purpose' in every musical composition? Barnett glosses this phrase as the striving of the composer for 'variety within unity', and maintains that contrary to popular belief in the case of some composers (he refers specifically to Schubert), this is always discoverable.[34] Furthermore, the status of context depends on an aesthetic theory which links contextual information to music convincingly. Does appropriateness, in Barnett's sense, really do this? I take him to mean that there is a discoverable logic to the way we negotiate our way through the world and the way music is constructed. But what sort of logic is musical logic? Sometimes it seems to be Réti's logic, sometimes Schenker's and at other times an argument in favour of the primacy

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Clarendon Press, 1995) p.93-4.

[32] Barnett, *The Performance of Music*, p.58.

[33] Ibid, p.57.

[34] Barnett, *The Performance of Music*, p.19 for his reference to 'variety within unity' and p.25

of a putative 'original' within a genre. It depends which analysis you read by him. The concept of appropriateness, though highly suggestive, seems too ill-defined as it stands to bear these burdens successfully.

Later in the book Barnett proposes the term *salience* (which is applied in turn to different parameters of sound) as a condition of appropriateness. Natural salience is 'the extent to which nature has endowed the musical materials with readily perceivable characteristics'.[35] It turns out that individualised interpretations can come to achieve equal validity in this scheme because of a degree of tolerance musical materials display. For example, triplets are recognisably triplets even when the first note is considerably longer than the second or third: but at some point, one kind of material collapses into another. This represents the limit of its tolerance.[36] Barnett presents this idea as an elaboration of (and improvement on) Carl Seashore's theory of derivation.[37] But here too, a question arises out of the notion of musical materials as 'natural' (e.g. the octave), a question to which Adorno has given a profound and perplexing turn.[38] Barnett's shrug of qualification attempts to patch over the lurking contradictions:

> In all of the four categories of pitch, duration, intensity and timbre, then, the composer and performer have at their disposal musical material that has already been selected for its advantages to salience. The effect of this selection in advance is to confer *universality* on musical materials, at least as far as Western music is concerned.[39]

Let me attempt a summary of Barnett's theory. Its fundamental concern, beyond rehabilitating the performer, is to reconcile the integrative demands of the composition with the widest possible variety of performance approaches.

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for the discussion and analysis of Schubert's E flat Impromptu, D.899.

[35] Ibid, p.107.

[36] In deciding exactly where to draw the line we encounter the 'sorites' paradox. I return to his idea in chapter four, in a discussion of the concept of musical ineffability.

[37] Barnett, *The Performance of Music*, p.103-107.

[38] Max Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), chapter 2.

[39] Barnett, *The Performance of Music*, p.109 (his italics).

Somehow, the performer has to justify her status as coauthor.[40] Barnett's view is work-centred, or at least work-orientated; the work is a bounded, unified object made up of identifiable musical events which constitute a discoverable structural unity. It is a certain tolerance between the constituents (natural, given) that allows the performer space to 'individualise' an interpretation. In short, even though Barnett is a structuralist, he manages to find room for the authenticity of the performer, whose interpretative choices are free within the constraints imposed by the laws of nature, as mediated by the relationships the composition contains.

The spotlight is hence very much on the work and its interpretation. Nonetheless, a number of avenues remain unexplored. In his theory, there is little to distinguish interpretation from performance, for example. And the listener remains a cipher who is never really problematised, for all her professed equality: '[T]he appropriateness of his [the performer's] rendition will depend upon how successfully... he relates the score's potential for salience to the levels of awareness in the listener.'[41] Practically all the discussion – a brief section on the performer and listener notwithstanding – is of the former.[42] Even in the final chapter, ('The Definition of Musical Talent') the issue of the listener, and by implication the social context of sounding performance, is only touched upon obliquely. Here Barnett discusses 'conversance with idiom', the knowledge of style that the performer acquires as a student in a metaphor that is strenuously linguistic.[43] Behind this lies an uncritical acceptance of a 'communication' model of musical performance, in which notions of semantic content and translation naturally find a home. Somehow the social setting recedes as Barnett links composition and performance ever more closely, and his concluding comments rather contradict his earlier claim that composer, performer and listener are equally important. Consider these comments:

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[40] Here Barnett follows Collingwood in asserting the creative, quasi-authorial role of the performer. See Barnett, *The Performance of Music,* p.17.
[41] Ibid, p.188.
[42] Ibid, p.196-201. Here he deals with the notion of redundancy, advising the performer not to emphasise the obvious, or play to the gallery.
[43] Ibid, p.202.

> [C]omposition and performance are efforts of the individual to relate experience to himself.
>
> Within the total activity of music, there is greater gain to understanding from performing than from listening and greater gain from composing than from performing.[44]

So perhaps the composer is primary after all. This denial of the listener is implicit in Barnett's definition of performance quoted above, which ignores context and assumes that performance entails a quasi-linguistic notion of communication. If communication is successful, the role of the listener is straightforwardly reconstitutive. For all its initial strenuous appeal to performer freedom, Barnett's theory occupies a social vacuum; and perhaps this is no more than we should expect of a book written by a pianist and which, whatever its assertions to the contrary, is addressed primarily to would-be pianists.

It may seem that I have been unduly critical of Barnett's ambitious work. However, many of the themes he touches on will reappear in the course of this study and it is very much to his credit that his analyses raise so many recurring issues. He is above all accurate in his overall diagnosis of a crisis in contemporary performance practice. For all his ingenuity, however, a deeper appreciation of the nature of this crisis eludes him.

Two Metaphors – an Interlude

How can we best describe a complex network of relationships? Barnett's study addresses the individual performer in a quasi-pedagogical context. It is a book about how performers (should) perform works. His theory tells us almost nothing about audiences and the concert experience itself. In other words, it largely ignores a substantial segment of the performance experience: music`s reception in the concert situation is viewed as neutral.

As a way forward, I suggest we distinguish between two broad approaches to performance theory, which I will label 'integrative' and 'diversifying'. The integrative approach can be thought of as follows:

performance is a position in a closed system containing a limited number of other positions (such as interpretation, or ritual), which are in a state of balance. Any shift in emphasis or change in intensity in one or another element forces the system to rebalance itself internally. This steady state might alternatively take the form of a regular oscillation between positions. Freud's theory of mind is such a closed system, based on a `hydraulic` metaphor of pressures, breaches and containers, or layers; Barnett's, by implication, is too. The final extension of this metaphor in theory would be the First Law of Thermodynamics (you cannot add or subtract from the total sum of energy the universe contains. only change states). As a metaphor it invites us to think in terms of closed systems and closure *tout court*.

The alternative metaphor – of diversification – sees performance as a potentially more or less complex activity, where the links to other positions can increase numerically, as well as in intensity. The underlying metaphor here is of an ecology (of a biological or environmental system), in which barriers (spatial, chemical) can both be breached and newly created, where the stability of the system depends on interactions which fluctuate in their complexity. This is a metaphor of proliferation (or possibly extinction too). For example, Steiner's ontology of art proposes that great works are, exegetically speaking, 'ecological': the relationships they contain are potentially infinitely various. However, the work itself is a bounded object and as such potentially the member of an integrated, closed system. (A canon might be thought of in this way.) On the other hand, Popperian scientific theory might be viewed as integrative: a (provisional) attempt to stabilise meanings and reduce ambiguity. Parodying Steiner, we might define theory as *the minimalisation of semantic ambiguity in respect of the formal means of expression.* Relativism can in turn be seen as the consequence of the inadequacy of each metaphor taken alone: in integrated systems all values are absolute, whereas an diversifying, expanding ecology proposes that all values are relative. A further dimension of this metaphorical contrast might be between state-orientated and process-orientated

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[44] Ibid, p.221 and p.222 respectively.

analysis, and it is such terms that I will later analyse the concepts of performance and interpretation.

The immediate post-war period – what Eric Hobsbawm calls the 'Golden Age' (1947-73)[45] – was marked by cultural stability, and in some respects particularly amenable to description as an integrated, closed system. Barnett and John Lazarus, whose work I will consider next, are united in their vision of musical life gone stale, in need of re-evaluation.[46] They combine description of a conservative system with premonitions of radical change. They both wish to rethink the performer's role. The conclusions they come to are oddly different.

Review: (2) Rethinking the Concert

John Lazarus's PhD thesis entitled 'Rethinking the Concert: a Fresh Approach to the Solo Instrumental Recital' (1978) starts from a conviction that 'the concert-going experience, by contrast with the part it once played in a creative musical experience, is largely unsatisfactory, and has to some extent been replaced by mass diffusion through mechanical means.'[47] Of the three assumptions made here, it is the central issue of the concert-going experience which deserves immediate attention in this context. The innocent desire to diagnose a commonly felt ill which Lazarus shares with Barnett leads in quite different directions because Lazarus and Barnett attend to – and neglect – different nodes of the performance complex. This is immediately obvious from Lazarus's title. Where Barnett's humanist emphasis is on the attainment of self-knowledge and the expression of individuality, Lazarus looks beyond the individual to music's place in society.

His argument in summary is this. Contemporary concert life (in the 1970s) lacked intensity. Audiences were passive and uninvolved. The reasons were to be located in the social structure of concert life, in particular its nature

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[45] Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991* (London: Abacus, 1994), p.8.
[46] Barnett, *The Performance of Music*, p.2.
[47] Lazarus, 'Rethinking the Concert', p.(i), introduction.

as ritual. Therefore the roles of performer and listener needed rethinking. He proposes that we think of the performer as a 'leader' and goes on to compare the role of the performer in a variety of musical worlds – rock, pop, jazz, blues, folk, entertainment – and concludes that the folk music culture is a suitable role model for art music practice, because it evinces the best (by which he means the most harmonious, most interactive) community values. He describes this relationship as 'circular', as opposed to the 'triangular' relationship of the art music concert. The three points of the triangle are composer, performer and listener. Circularity signifies for Lazarus what we might call a 'feedback loop' and signals heightened audience engagement and more successful 'leadership' on the part of the performer. In other words, for Lazarus *process* (as opposed to stasis) becomes a social ideal. The audience and the performer are members of a community and musical performance is, at its best, a quasi-religious, devotional experience, which takes the individual beyond mere self-awareness.

The study aspires on one level to the status of social science – it includes a substantial questionnaire and qualitative assessment of its results[48] – and it does not shrink from making recommendations, which I will quote at some length:

> It is worth recording the simple devices which could be the guidelines for performers wishing to operate step by step with practical innovations, for while these are, on their own, by no means radical, together they forge a new approach to the concert. We summarise here the details of the suggestions made: to talk to the audience; to engage in (weekend) courses in which discussion and performance alternates; to adopt a more practical clothing on the platform, or clothing that feels 'right' for the music played; to insist on community-oriented seating so the audience is aware of itself; to by-pass the platform; to reject the microphone systems; to gather a scattered audience at the front; to play requests; to improvise; to surprise with changes of programme and to juxtapose unlikely works; to encourage the audience to ask questions and to make comments...[49]

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[48] These are suggestive, rather than conclusive, a matter of some embarrassment to the author.

Perhaps Lazarus deserves congratulation for his foresight here: many of these ideas have in fact been adopted in the last two decades and the motive has indeed been to break down barriers between audience and performer. (He is wrong about the use of mediating technology. however, which has been embraced rather than rejected.) But these recommendations emerge from a number of misconceptions, the most fundamental of which is concealed in the contrast between triangularity (=bad) and circularity (=good).[50] The majority of Lazarus's recommendations are at the expense of the composer and the work and his theorising rather skates over its central importance. Of course the work, particularly the nineteenth-century conception of the autonomous abstract instrumental piece, occupies a central position in conventional concert life. It is, in a concrete sense, its raison d'être. Art music performers are akin to curators in what has been called 'the imaginary museum of musical works'.[51] The rituals of concert life exist partly to neutralise the intrusions of context. They are a way of policing the museum. Tinkering with the barriers (let alone breaking them down completely) obviously threatens the work and its autonomy. Here Lazarus confronts a paradox: no matter how well the performer plays (=leads) she cannot control audience response, or at least become aware of doing so, because the audience has almost no performance options itself, and can only acquire them at the risk of obliterating the music (in the form of the work). Lazarus's more radical recommendations ('play requests', 'make comments') strike a note of absurdity because they fail to acknowledge the central role of the work concept in concert life.

I would identify a second weakness in this study, this time methodological: it is a failure to define key terms closely enough for them to be of assistance in analysis. A comparative approach, with reference to social and historical elements, founders because key concepts simply emerge unreflected upon into the text. Too often, Lazarus adopts a simplistic dialectical approach listing advantages and disadvantages, without really clarifying what is being

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[49] Lazarus, 'Rethinking the Concert', p.214-5.

[50] His ideas about the relative roles of performer and listener and the communication model they entail are also open to attack.

[51] Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: an Essay in the Philosophy of Music*

evaluated.[52] So when he claims (prescriptively) that 'a true ritual should be an embodiment of community',[53] we search in vain for clarification of what community is, beyond a woolly sense of simultaneous presence engendered by concert attendance, and the words resonate emptily. What is missing is a concept of the *practice*. While there is nothing to suggest a role-based analysis of the concert is doomed, the concept of leadership is as needy of definition as the other terms used here. Ritual, too, is under-defined, in spite of lengthy commentary, and much is made of the concert's origins in church traditions.[54] I sense an underlying desire on the author's part to simplify, harmonise and intensify the concert experience, to overcome listener-alienation under the auspices of a (God-inspired?) leader-performer. To argue that 'the problem which bedevils all involved in a concert is to maintain that balance between composer and performer' is potentially fruitful; but to continue that this '*at one time, was no problem at all*' is no more than the wishful thinking of a creationist: it underlines a subtext of quasi-religious loss and a need for salvation.[55] And as I think Lazarus is aware, all this contrasts strangely with the increasingly distant, ironic appreciation of performance in the last quarter of the century.

Rethinking the concert entails rethinking its key concepts and defining them more closely. What exactly is performance, where does it fit, and into what? Lazarus sees his task as 'building a picture of the concert', while at the same time being aware of the open-endedness of a contextualising study.[56] So admittedly any answers will be provisional. But there is much to take issue with, both in the approach – with its lax, easy-going dialectic – and in some of

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(Oxford: Clarendon, 1992) deals with the origin and proliferation of the work concept.

[52] Lazarus, 'Rethinking the Concert'. Ritual is for example 'creative' and 'destructive' (p.91); the chapter on recording contrasts the listener's loss with the listener's gain (p.122-129); and there is the model of the good circle versus the bad triangle I have already mentioned.

[53] Lazarus, 'Rethinking the Concert', p.94.

[54] Ibid, chapter 4, p.77-106. This linking of concert life to religious ritual has an oddly prescriptive feel. The connection one might expect to figure most strongly – between music and 'Kunstreligion' – is only touched upon in passing.

[55] Ibid, p.95. My emphasis.

[56] Ibid, p.1-2: 'Factors removed from actual performance have helped shape the performer's role: the economics of performance, the range of people to whom performance was accessible, and who involved themselves in it, the need of audiences for special excellence. The list gets

the central assumptions. The problem in analysing performance is certainly tied to an increasing complexity: Lazarus's comments in his introduction make this clear. The idealistic invocation of a past utopia does not do it justice.

Definitions and Identities

I believe Lazarus's analysis founders not because of a lack of ambition, or of speculative imagination, but initially through imprecision. There are two issues here: the first is the matter of definitions, the second that of style.

Consider the former in relation to Edward Said's cultural criticism. The central argument of his influential book *Orientalism* is that the West's power over the Orient functioned through an act of imposition, where the West defined and represented to Orientals what they were and then, in self-fulfilling prophecy, took this as their alibi in exercising power over them.[57] The act of defining is fundamental, then, because it identifies an essence, which underwrites an attitude, which in turn upholds power relations. Said is describing a tight, unbreakable hermeneutic circle. Essence, in this incarnation, is an invisible, intangible quality, not amenable to further analysis, conveniently to hand for those in power who require justification for oppressive behaviour. This argument can operate on many levels – political, racial, linguistic, aesthetic – and in Said's exemplary formulations, the tie to a counter-notion of performance is crucial. Performance is invoked as a way of avoiding closure, of avoiding the kind of circular argument outlined above, which fixes or 'reifies' meaning into (habitual) interpretations which support a status quo. Here, in Said's preface to Richard Poirier's *The Performing Self*, is his argument in his own words, applied to literature:

> Everything about Poirier's work... conclusively illustrates how inadequate a basis for politics, aesthetics and philosophy is the mere luxuriating in a fixed identity which

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longer as the implications of performance are grasped, and as we will see, as its ever-renewed umbilical cord with the society in which it takes place is analysed.'

[57] Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London: Penguin, first edition 1978, revised edition 1995).

so much criticism tends to become. To *be*, to remain in the position of a professionalised know-everything critic, for example, is only to lose touch with what you don't know [...]. The point isn't to *be* one thing... but to understand the pleasures and accomplishments of what one isn't. Literature is a 'field of energy', not a magistrate's court or a closely guarded fiefdom. Poirier's attack on identity politics is really an indictment of what people do not

> experience if, instead of looking at linguistic performance, they take language at face value; if they seriously believe that words and objects are in stable contact with each other; if their own professional expressions of piety and awe, of groups or ethnic particularity, come instead to stand for real piety and real awe, real identity, real particularity, which in fact have to be forged and reforged constantly.[58]

Here we glimpse for the first time how a notion of performativity can be used to stake out a world view. Actions speak louder than words, certainly, but Said is pointing beyond this to the evanescence of word and deed, and hence to the impossibility of more than provisional identity.[59] Reforging, reshaping, reliving: all this points to the importance of historical change at the expense of the analytical act, which must nonetheless receive its due. For as Peter Novick says, Said 'seemed to be trying to have it both ways by denying the existence of a "real" Orient, and savaging Orientalists for misrepresenting it.'[60] In other words, the act of definition must occur somewhere, even if not explicitly; or at least a text must entail definitions which avoid ambiguity, or the result may be self-contradiction.[61]

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[58] Richard Poirier, *The Performing Self: Compositions and Decompositions in the Languages of Contemporary Life*, foreword by Edward Said (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, second edition 1992), p.xii.

[59] Incidentally, the sense in which Poirier's selves 'perform' is a rather different one from that which occupies me here. His is a literary performance in which the word, already a reification of meaning, can nonetheless function processually. So it is through energy (p.xxiii) and the excesses of parody (essay 2) and above all the idea that 'the first artwork for an artist is the shaping of his own personality' (Norman Mailer, quoted on p.102) that the literary performance takes shape. References here are from Poirier, *The Performing Self.*

[60] Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The 'Objectivity Question' and the American Historical Profession* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p.563.

[61] I take up this problem again in chapter three in my discussion of performance. Poirier and Said's literary conceptions of performance operate within a reifying system – natural language -- while claiming nonetheless to be resolutely devoted to processual change. The question is: how far is this a problem when the conception is transferred on to musical performance?

The paradox this critique hides is visible again when viewed in epistemological terms. Is relativism inevitable? A definition claims to identify similarities between events (objects, processes, performances, segments of reality...) and words already contain within them this Platonic sense of a general category. One might say that a word is a kind of micro-definition in itself, or even a kind of micro-theory. But definitions – and with them, objective knowledge – become impossible, if we allow that the most significant thing about the past is the fact that it can never re-enact itself.[62] Anyone who claims this is imposing a definition, or rather an anti-definition, a radical scepticism. Richard J. Evans comments:

> If all knowledge is relative, if it is impossible to give an accurate summary of a discourse without at the same time projecting one's own reading onto it, then why should we not give to the work of Barthes, or Derrida, or Jenkins, or Ankersmit, or White any significance that we wish to give it? [...] In practice, even the most extreme deconstructionists do not really accept that their own theories can be applied to their own work.[63]

As meaning is deferred, commonalities are not merely lost: new ones are potentially created. The time scale within which the change or 'slippage' of meaning operates is critical, too. Language retains enough stability to reflect on its own process of meaning shift. In other words, the debate about whether meaning is an essence or construction cannot in this context at least be resolved. What the academic faces is that the act of definition is an inescapable fact, carried out (hopefully) in the full awareness that this *act* is performative and, as such, a provisional construction.[64]

As already implied, definitions need not be explicit. This raises the question of style, and with it genre and discipline. In one respect, the framework I have chosen for this study is familiar from works like *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, whose editors asked a range of eminent theorists to 'do theory.

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[62] Richard J. Evans, *In Defence of History* (London: Granta, 1997), p.112.
[63] Evans, *In Defence of History*, p.231.
[64] Of further interest here is Taruskin's discussion of scholarship and artistry in relation to performance, in *Text and Act*, p.21-31.

by considering a term prevalent in literary discourse, examining its history'.[65] The result is an analysis of a cluster of related terms which, hardly surprisingly, given the number of authors, fail to harmonise. (In consequence, it does not really matter what order you read them in.) One is immediately struck by the range of tone. Contrast the high serious academicism of Judith Butler on 'Desire', the relaxed review-journalese of Louis Menand ('Diversity'), or the analytical thrust of Barbara Herrnstein Smith ('Value/Evaluation'), for example. It is instructive to compare the latter pair in the act of definition: Menand adopts a tone of flat colloquialism, whereas Herrnstein Smith pursues a highly organised dissection of the OED's definitions of 'value' and 'worth'.[66] Menand is concerned to link the 'fact' of diversity to a paradox about American culture, what he perceives as its 'uniform diversity', the inherent conformism of a certain kind of individualism. In other words, his analysis is geographically and temporally localised, and to that extent, specific and relative. It makes a provisional, particular point. Herrnstein Smith attempts to unpick a more problematic term by examining entailment and metaphor – looking as it were inwards, rather than outwards – and specifying senses of the word.[67] To this extent she aligns herself stylistically and methodologically with analytical philosophy.

The differences in style I locate here reinforce the distinction I made above between 'steady-state' integrative theorising, and a processual, diversifying approach. The difference – ultimately one of emphasis – lies with the attitude towards semantic stability. With this in mind, let me now turn to an analytical philosopher's approach to the question of performance, to see what kind of definition it yields.

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[65] *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, eds. Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p.3. Simon Frith, in *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) attempts something along similar lines.
[66] Lentricchia and McLaughlin, *Critical Terms for Literary Study*. Menand comments that '"Diversity" is a term with no essential philosophical, political or aesthetic content. It simply states a fact...' (p.336).
[67] Lentricchia and McLaughlin, *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, p.181.

A Philosophical Parenthesis: Godlovitch's Performance Model

Stan Godlovitch's recent study entitled *Musical Performance: A Philosophical Study* is the product of a discipline – philosophical aesthetics – which has flourished in the English-speaking world (particularly America).[68] Those working in this field have usually trained as analytical philosophers. They aim to lay down definitions by specifying necessary and sufficient conditions and testing these by looking for gaps in logic and, above all, by speculating about borderline instances. They also try to map new areas of experience by proposing new distinctions and terminology. In this endeavour, intuition plays a significant role. The speculation often takes the form of 'thought experiments' which propose unusual conditions and analyse their outcomes. These 'what-if' scenarios have a distinguished record in areas where actual experimentation is severely handicapped. These, then, are Godlovitch's tools and they are employed with some skill in the first fifty pages of his study, which considers in turn the constituents of performance – 'sounds, agents, works and listeners' – commenting on such important sub-aspects as intention, skill, constraints, continuity, interpretation, ritual, and audience attention, making many illuminating distinctions in the process. The definition (or, rather, model) he finally arrives at 'traces out a series of conditions necessary for successful performance' though he remains, he says 'uncommitted to their joint sufficiency':

> P1 is a model performance only if P1 is (or involves):
> - a datable sound sequence (that is, sonic event),
> - immediately caused by some human (-like) being,
> - the immediate output of some musical instrument,
> - intended to be caused at a specific time and place, and in a specified manner,
> - the exercise of skilled activity,
> - the outcome of appropriately creditworthy physical skill,
> - an instance of some identifiable musical work,
> - intended as an instance of such a work,

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[68] Stan Godlovitch, *Musical Performance: A Philosophical Study* (London: Routledge, 1998). Incidentally Godlovitch, like the aesthetician Stephen Davies, whose work I will refer to elsewhere, is from New Zealand.

- successful as a constraint model of such a work.
- intended for some third-party listener.
- presented before some third-party listener.
- listened to by some third-party listener exercising active concentrated attention.[69]

As is immediately obvious, this model is intended for the traditional concert situation and as such is very much the kind of analysis a lawyer might produce of a concept. It makes no claim to a wider application by trying to draw parallels with performance in other areas of culture, nor does it seriously consider the history of relevant institutions. What it does do – with considerable deftness – is to spray a kind of fixative onto the event we are familiar with and draw out its structure.

Consider once more for a moment Herrnstein Smith's approach. It might seem unduly naive: why stoke the analytical engine with materials from a dictionary? After all, lexicographers only try pragmatically to exemplify typical past and present usage. In the case of value/worth, her aim is to make us aware of the circularity of some acts of definition and the danger, on arriving back at the point of entry to claim (or imply) that something just 'is'. (Said pointed to precisely this danger, too.) I turn now to another example to pursue the argument further. Peter Kivy, in his analysis of the concept of authenticity, makes the point that philosophy is often a process of renewing the past, because the major questions all have a history of answers. His claim that (musical) authenticity is an exception to this is, I believe, false in a way which throws light on the limitations of Godlovitch's essay: firstly, the philosophical literature on the subject, understood broadly, is vast (including distinguished contributions from Kierkegaard, Heidegger and Adorno, among others); the fact that it is not 'philosophical' in Kivy's sense simply indicates a problem of relevance, or narrowness of focus. Secondly, the mere fact of a word's existence in a dictionary is enough to guarantee it a philosophical history of sorts – though not perhaps a recorded one – and Kivy's analysis, like Herrnstein Smith's, begins with a bald quotation from a dictionary from which he proceeds to

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[69] Godlovitch, *Musical Performance*, p.49.

construct a detailed, highly suggestive and original analysis.[70] Godlovitch would have us believe that his model is built up from point zero, even dispensing with the aid of a dictionary entry.[71] But both he and Kivy share in their analytical stance an obliviousness to history[72] or to work in other disciplines. If the search for a final authority in an analysis does not rest on precedent (from the history of a relevant discourse), inevitably it is sought elsewhere. Godlovitch looks inwards, while acknowledging obliquely the normative aspect of language:

> In trying to expose the intuitive roots in each condition, I have at times stretched or departed from intuition by attributing to certain conditions a more integral role in performance than colloquy [i.e. accepted usage] demands.[73]

Within psychology the danger of reliance on intuition and introspection have long been recognised.[74] In intellectual terms, the former may amount to no more than accumulated unexamined prejudice.

The conclusion I would draw from this is that however sharp the analytical tools employed are, there is no way in which an examination of a concept (expressed in language) can operate outside a hermeneutic circle. Both the history of a concept and its logical deployment have a part to play in refining our understanding of it. Different disciplines choose different emphases, with the analytical philosopher inclined to disregard historical factors.

In the light of this, let us assume that there is something to be gained by widening the focus, in a bid to outmanoeuvre ingrained habits of thought.

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[70] Peter Kivy, *Authenticities: Philosophical Reflections on Musical Performance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995). His claim about the history of musical authenticity is in the preface, p.xii. The dictionary definition he uses as a starting point for analysis (p.3) is taken from the Oxford English dictionary.

[71] Godlovitch, *Musical Performance,* p.13, 'Constituents of Performance'.

[72] This is something Max Paddison draws attention to in his review of Kivy: *Authenticities* in *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 36 (1996), 330-332: 'What this book does, quite remarkably, is to bring us to the limits of its own particular style of writing aesthetics, leaving us both impressed by its thoroughness within its own terms of reference and at the same time bothered by its evident lack of a theory that can give a satisfying account of the frequently evoked notion of "context" – social, cultural or historical.' (p.332)

[73] Godlovitch, *Musical Performance,* p.49.

[74] G. Butler and F. McManus, *Psychology: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p.4.

Another way of doing so might be to ask a question Godlovitch's methodology tends to conceal: why should an analytical philosopher have produced a study of musical performance now? What makes this a timely concern?

Review: (3) The Concert

The recent upsurge of interest in performance certainly needs accounting for, as in its turn does the emergence of performance art as a genre in the 1960s. Previous writing on performance was often anecdotal and impressionistically descriptive.[75] Given the current emphasis on theory, we might fruitfully ask why performance was not central to previous theorising about music, and what stood in its place.

Over most of the last century, and certainly until quite recently, the academic study of music has tended to be identified with the history of musical works. Prominent and influential figures in (particularly German) musicology, such as the critical theorist Theodor Adorno and Carl Dahlhaus elaborated work-centred theories. In doing so, they were building on a long tradition of like-minded thought; unfortunately, performers and performance tended to be marginalised.[76] The institution of the concert was the stable locus operandi; as

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[75] There is an extensive field of social music history which deals with performance, along with performance criticism. Here are some suggested points of departure: *Readings in the History of Music in Performance*, ed. Carol MaClintock (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979) for a selection of source texts; Frederick Dorian, *The History of Music in Performance: the Art of Musical Interpretation from the Renaissance to Our Day* (New York: Norton, 1942), which maps the emergence and development of 'performative' interpretation up to the generation of Hindemith and Stravinsky; and Arthur Loesser, *Men Women and Pianos: a Social History* (London: Gollancz, 1955), devoted specifically to the piano. A useful work in the more scholarly field of notation and its interpretation by performers is Clive Brown, *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice, 1750-1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

[76] One commentator puts it like this: 'Music history was until now understood primarily as the history of works, styles and composers. Its extension to embrace the history of sounds through investigating "performance practice" is a more recent, praiseworthy achievement. For music history is also the history of listening, the history of the [listening] public.' ['Musikgechichte wurde bisher vornehmlich als Werkgechichte, Stilgechichte, Komponistengechichte verstanden. Die Erweiterung zur Klanggechichte durch die Untersuchungen zur 'Aufführungspraxis' ist eine neuere, rühmliche Errungenschaft. Doch Musikgechichte ist auch Gechichte des Hőrens, Gechichte des Publikums.'] Hans-Werner Heister, *Das Konzert: Theorie einer Kulturform* in two volumes (Wilhemshaven: Heinrichshofen, 1983), p.30 (my translation). Heister quotes here from Kurt Blaukopf, 'Werktreue und Bearbeitung. Zur Soziologie der Integrität des musikalischen Kunstwerks', Schriftenreihe 'Musik und Gesellschaft' III, Herausgeber Kurt Blaukopf, (Karlsruhe, 1968), p.30. See also Carl Dahlhaus, *Foundations of Music History,*

the electronic age brought about changes in music reception, Adorno was above all concerned with defending the hegemonic position of the work within a complex network of relationships – composer, listener, performer and setting at the levels of production and consumption – and Dahlhaus in turn problematised the writing of history per se and the particular problems of historiography when applied to music.[77] Tied to this project was his theorising of the autonomy of music – emerging out of the nineteenth-century idea of 'absolute music' – and the central role that Werktreue ('fidelity to the work') had come to play in this.[78] Dahlhaus traced the emergence of work autonomy from the late eighteenth century to the post war age and it was one of his pupils – Hans-Werner Heister – who undertook a more detailed exposition of the concert (in the 1970s, at the same time as Barnett and Lazarus). All three were motivated by a similar sense of crisis. Heister reports:

> Only with the 'crisis' of the concert, now clearly in opposition to the new [technischen] media, does the category begin to lose its self-evident nature, to break down. This, in line with a more general move towards increased 'metatheoretical' reflection on the significance of musicological terminology, leads to more intensive consideration of the concept of the 'concert'.
>
> [Erst mit der 'Krise' des Konzerts, dem in Gestalt der technischen Medien evident andere Formen gegenübertreten, beginnt die Selbstverständlichkeit der Kategorie zu zergehen. Dies, wie überhaupt eine verstärkte 'metatheoretiche' Reflexion der musikwissenschaftlichen Terminologie, führt zu intensiven Bemühungen auch um den Begriff des 'Konzerts'.][79]

This shift from text to context, from work to setting, notably retains its concern with objects and events – with *structures* – rather than with individuals and

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trans. J. B. Robinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983) for a detailed exposition of this issue. The seminal secondary text on Adorno's aesthetics of music is Max Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

[77] Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music*, chapter five, and Dahlhaus, *Foundations of Music History*.

[78] Carl Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, trans. Roger Lustig (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

[79] Heister, *Das Konzert*, vol.1, p.27, (my translation).

narratives. It stays away from subjectivity and particularity. In this sense it is only logical to study the concert, rather than the performer.

Heister inherited a Hegelian/Marxist methodological apparatus – the dialectic, with its tensed binary oppositions and 'sublations' ('Aufhebungen') – along with the remnants of the tradition and vocabulary of idealism. This is something he is well aware of.[80] For all its abstraction, Heister's prose largely avoids the occasional obfuscations of Adorno, and his study is a carefully organised structure in which concepts are introduced in orderly fashion. There is even a suggestion of circularity in the format, which Heister highlights.[81] The most important of the binary oppositions – like them or not[82] – Heister works with is the 'systematic' versus the 'historical', which draws on a distinction with deep roots in German musicology (as well as paralleling Saussure's distinction between the synchronic and the diachronic respectively[83]). Das Systematische is my plea for clarity of definition writ large. Heister's study as a whole is divided into four large sections, each of which sets up a dialectic, the point of which he summarises as follows:

> The real, essential logic – historical and structural – of the concert itself and its development is in the end the foregrounding and maintenance of a balancing act [Schwebezustand] which (following Adorno) could be called 'suspension' [Einstand]: the ideal of balance between a paradoxically unified integration of the visual and the (dominant) audible as behavioural modes…
>
> [Die historisch wie strukturell eigentliche und wesentliche Logik des Konzerts selbst und seiner Entwicklung ist schliesslich die Herausarbeitung und Bewährung eines Schwebezustands, der (mit einem Begriff Adornos) 'Einstand' heissen kann: das Balance-Ideal einer

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[80] Heister, *Das Konzert,* vol.1, p.19-21, where he comments on the datedness of the method, noting wryly that his Marxist-inspired utopianism will not be to everyone's taste.

[81] Ibid, p.40. Section D in vol. 2 returns to reconsider some of the materials of section A.

[82] Dunsby, Taruskin and a whole raft of 'post-structuralist' thinkers who associate them with structuralism tend not to. It is instructive to read Taruskin's collection *Text and Act* with this in mind, as John Butt in his penetrating review has, pointing up the contradictions and paradoxes Taruskin's conceptual world contains: John Butt, 'Acting up a text: the scholarship of performance and the performance of scholarship' (review of Richard Taruskin: *Text and Act*), *Early Music* (May 1996), 323-332.

[83] For a simple exposition of Saussurian structuralism, see Culler, *Literary Theory*, p.57-60.

> widersprűchlich-einheitlichen Integration von Sehen und (dominanten) Hören als Verhaltensmodalitäten...][84]

Heister's Hegelianism does not take on board Adornian 'negative dialectics'; it is of a more traditional nature.[85] The concert emerges as the product of a series of elaborate checks and balances that serve to create stability. There are four sections in his study. The first concerns itself with the concept of autonomy and its concrete realisation in the concert. The second deals with the conflicts that have arisen historically in creating and upholding the institution of the concert as a site of universally valid values; the third looks at individual freedoms and dependencies (economic, artistic) and examines the commodity character of music.[86] The final section examines the concert ritual at a more detailed level and includes discussion of the work concept.

I cannot hope to do justice to all aspects of this compendious work here, nor would it be entirely appropriate: its focus is, as I have intimated, an objectified notion of the concert and Heister's ambition is to situate the concert in a concrete utopian moment in society. (The paradox this description contains is indicative of the method.) This takes him into detailed analyses of social relations, an area which lies beyond the scope of this study. It is a moot point whether the concert really is adequately captured in Heister's notion of an abstract category where the concrete and the ideal meet.

Heister's analysis, like Barnett's, assumes work-centredness. Theorising the concert as the receptacle of a musical work in a sense prejudges the issue. Let me quote Said again at this point:

> ... the Hegelian tradition... presumes an inescapable historical teleology that incorporates everything in its relentless forward path. This I find unacceptable [...] I shall briefly suggest an alternative based on a *geographical* or

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[84] Heister, *Das Konzert*, vol.1, p.22.

[85] The contrast between Heister and Lazarus is very noticeable, the one methodologically solicitous, the other over-relaxed. For a discussion in Heister of the leadership thesis/metaphor, see *Das Konzert*, vol.1, section C 6.3.

[86] About which Heister has subsequently written: 'Music in concert and music in the background: two poles of musical realisation', in *Companion to Contemporary Musical Thought*, vol. 1, eds. John Paynter, Tim Howell, Richard Orton and Peter Seymour (London: Routledge, 1992) p.46-71.

spatial idea that is truer to the diversity and spread of human activity. Even if we confine ourselves to 'Western' classical music, what is impressive about musical practice in all its variety is that it takes place in many different places, for different purposes, for different constituencies and practitioners, and of course at many different times. To assemble all that, to herd it under one dialectical model is – no matter how compelling or dramatic the formulation – simply an untrue and therefore insufficient account of what happens.[87]

Although these practices diverge strongly, Said would, I think, argue that his concept of *performance* can be employed across the cultural divides, transcendentally. What unites the diversity of practices is the fact that they all contain performances. In other words, we may conclude that a performance does not necessarily require a concert, though the reverse might be true.

Review: (4) Musicking

What I hope is emerging is a sense of the valency of the word performance. Just as an atom bonds according to the number of open positions it carries, so performance governs, and is governed by, a range of pre/post-positional options: performance of, for, by, at, in. Ultimately it is impossible to evade the claims of any one of these positions, though some theorists go to considerable lengths to deny one or another. The results can be instructive and salutary.

Take the case of Christopher Small and his recent (published in 1998) book entitled *Musicking: the Meanings of Performance and Listening*, a sustained attempt to elide the issue of *what* is performed, by emphasising the setting, the audience and the performer.[88] At the heart of this enquiry lies this question: does the performance produce the self or the self the performer?[89]

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[87] Edward Said, *Musical Elaborations* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1991), p.xiv-xv. In this passage Said is discussing his intellectual indebtedness to Adorno.

[88] Christopher Small, *Musicking: the Meanings of Performing and Listening* (New Hampshire: Wesleyan Universty Press, 1998).

[89] The problem of the nature and constitution of the self can be viewed as yet another perspective on the 'essence' vs. 'construction' debate already mentioned. Resolutions are

Small presumes to have found an answer. For him, '*performance does not exist in order to present musical works, but rather, musical works exist in order to give performers something to perform.*'[90]

What this commentary does is to subordinate the issue of the content of a performance to the putative needs of a human being. But this simply prejudges a live issue. In order to smooth the path of his polemic, Small makes what he takes to be a bold move: he coins the intransitive verb 'to musick'. This is by no means the first time this verb has been invented. David Elliot has recently done the same thing for broadly the same reasons.[91] In any case, it exists in German as 'musizieren', a fact Small seems unaware of, but which he might take heart in. He defines it as follows:

> *To musick is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practising, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing.*[92]

Some composers might raise an eyebrow at the arch pedantry of this gloss on their activity especially when Small later claims that the verb 'to musick' is merely descriptive and unconcerned with value judgements.[93] It is, Small adds, 'not enough to ask, *What is the nature or meaning of this work of music?*' because 'if there is no fixed and stable musical work, as is true of many cultures, then the question cannot even be asked.' Instead, Small proposes we

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anything but easy to come by. Consider, for example, the highly influential work of the sociologist Erving Goffman. In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (USA: Anchor Books, 1959; second edition Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969) he arrives at the conclusion that the self is the sum of what a person does: 'A correctly staged and performed scene leads the audience to impute a self to the performed character, but this imputation - this self - is a product of a scene that comes off, and not a *cause* of it.' (p.244-5) Notice the regulative role of content in this definition: the self is produced by *correctly* staged and performed scenes. Who, we might ask, decides on a scene's correctness? And how? And further to this, is *everything* a 'self' does a performance? I will take up this theme (and Goffman's work on it) in chapter three below.

[90] Small, *Musicking*, p.8, his italics.

[91] David J.Elliot, *Music Matters: A New Philosophy of Music Education* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995). Elliot resolves the problem of text by reference to Richard Dawkins's theory of memes. See chapter four for further discussion.

[92] Small, *Musicking*, p.9, his italics.

[93] Small, *Musicking*, p.9.

ask a more interesting question: '*What does it mean when this performance (of this work) takes place at this time, in this place, with these participants?*'[94]

His book is an extended answer to this question. Firstly, it assumes that 'everyone is musical'[95] and that 'everyone's musical experience is valid';[96] that the primary meaning of music lies in the relationships its performance enacts (or in Said's vocabulary above, 'reforges, relives'); that there is a 'universal' language of gestures and ritual which define these relationships, embodied in the example of the symphony concert Small analyses; further, that the role split in the Western art music tradition (musician subdivides into composer/performer/listener) entails a repressive hierarchical relationship; and that these relationships are in some way encoded in the compositions themselves, which exclude, for example the amateur.[97] In other words, when Small asks if there is 'something built into the nature of the works of that [i.e. Western concert] repertory which makes performing and listening to them under any circumstances go counter to the way I believe human relationships should be', his answer is affirmative.[98]

As I have indicated, Small's book is in the first instance a polemic, an extended critique of the concert with a social-anthropological slant.[99] It imputes a sub-text to the ritual and this hidden agenda of oppression occasionally smacks of paranoia and conspiracy theory.[100] The parallels between the symphony orchestra and other 'oppressive' nineteenth-century social forms are

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[94] Ibid, p.10.
[95] Ibid, p.207.
[96] Ibid, p.13.
[97] Ibid, p.73. His contentions suit group music-making rather better than solo playing.
[98] Ibid, p.16.
[99] An important inspiration is the work of the anthropologist Gregory Bateson.
[100] 'Although the performance of the musical works is clearly at the centre of the event, nonetheless nothing that happens in this vast space is insignificant, not even such apparently trivial elements as the buying and giving up of tickets, the arrangement of the seating, the demeanour of orchestra and audience, the taking of drinks in the foyer, the purchase of a program booklet. All are essential features of the event and go towards giving it its character. If this were not so, if the events were concerned with the musical works and those alone, people would long since have ceased to go to concerts and would be happier to sit at home and listen to the works on records or radio.' (Small, *Musicking*, p.76.) This is barely an argument at all: there may be any number of reasons why people attend concerts, and the suggestion that they are motivated by a wish to hear live performances of musical works is surely the most plausible. Why should the details *necessarily* be significant? Beyond that, it is an undisputed fact that most music is nowadays consumed outside the concert hall: people *are* happier to listen to works on records or radio (or portable stereo).

arguably all too obvious, as Nicholas Cook points out.[101] The analysis is, in my opinion, an instructive failure because it does not pursue the central concept of performance rigorously. What, I would ask, is musicking, or performing music, without a definition of music's content? And in a culture where the content of musicking has such a central role, how can we accept a theory which refuses to address the issue of musical quality? Small is aware of the dilemma and the book ends with a frank statement of the contradiction between the author`s grudgingly avowed taste for certain works in the Western canon and his wholesale dismissal of the relationships they apparently embody.[102]

What else does Small leave out? There is a cluster of questions surrounding the musical work which require answers. How exactly do musical materials embody relationships?[103] How are we to evaluate music? How, in turn, are we to evaluate interpretation of music(al) (works)?[104] To what extent do extra-auditory sense impressions play a role in evaluations? And finally, where is the boundary between what is and what is not 'performed' in the culture, if we do not allow clearer definitions of the content (role, text...)? If we allow roadies, cleaners and ushers into the performance, or describe recordings as performances, there would seem to be no end to the concept's application, which would entail a collapse of meaning.[105]

Small, like Lazarus, has produced a theory of performance which is extreme in its resolute denial of text and embrace of context. It is nonetheless a theory which acknowledges a great deal of recent thought in and outside musicology. This is particularly apparent in its rejection of formalism – the idea

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[101] Nicholas Cook, *Music: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) p.79.

[102] Small, *Musicking,* p.220-221.

[103] Small says: '... if musicking is indeed a facet of the great unitary performance art we call ritual, and is thus an aspect of the language of biological communication that every living thing, as a condition of survival, has to be able to understand and to use, then it must follow that all normally endowed human beings are born with the gift of musicking, no less than they are born with the gift of speaking and understanding speech.' (*Musicking,* p.207.) Of the various assumptions here among the most tendentious are the following: that we can say precisely what music is; and that it is a 'language' which can be communicated. Small's thinking here suggests above all the influence of John Blacking's well-known text *How Musical is Man?* (London: Faber, 1976).

[104] Small goes to considerable lengths to avoid discussing musical interpretation and analysis. See *Musicking,* p.215.

[105] Small, *Musicking*: see p.9 for his comments on ancillary staff and p.77 on recordings

that music consists of abstracted sounds which constitute an autonomous structure – and of the reverential attitude towards 'great works' that often accompanies it. And it is revealingly frank about its motives. Small tells us how he has always felt uncomfortable with the concert tradition and the fussy rituals it imposes. The next text I propose to examine provides a populist rationale for them.

Review: (5) The Concert, again

I have been proposing that we view performance as a concept which operates within a system of related concepts, such as interpretation. ritual or occasion. If Small's negative reaction to the site of performance – the concert – is merely an extreme case of a generally felt unease, what exactly have he and others been reacting against? It may be helpful at this point to frame the discussion in terms of a *modernist* conception of performance (with the implication that we have by now moved beyond this into a *post-modernist* phase).

Central to the modernist position is, as Barnett and Lazarus make clear, the privileging of composition over performance. This reaches an extreme point in mid century and is exemplified in comments by Hindemith and Stravinsky, which downgrade the performer from interpreter to executant. Lionel Salter sums this up neatly in his guide to concert etiquette: 'The greater the artist, the more faithful the interpretation.' In other words, the ideal performance would be at the vanishing point where the performer is only present to the listener as a cipher for the composition. For, Salter claims, 'it is the music written by the composer that is really important'.[106]

Salter is writing in the immediate post-war years, addressing a young audience of potential music 'Liebhaber' which is unfamiliar with the ways of the concert hall. His book is the perfect source for those requiring an introduction to its rituals and the rationale behind them. Everything – as far as

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described as performances.

[106] Salter, *Going to a Concert*, (London: Phoenix House, 1950), quotations from p.90-91.

humanly possible – in the performance setting is subordinated to the Work and the Composer who stands behind it: 'The Composer is the Real Star', as one sub-heading has it.[107] Being a good concert-goer entails the following:

- listening single-mindedly, undistracted by other activities (such as reading the programme note);[108]

- not free-associating, or inventing narratives which the composer has not sanctioned;[109]

- hearing the structure of the music;[110]

- listening with both feeling and understanding, with the appropriate attitude of aesthetic contemplation;[111]

- becoming active as a musician oneself, for example by joining a choir and singing.[112]

Being a good *performer* is about subordinating oneself to the composer's wishes, which in turn means foregrounding the musical thought as opposed to the acrobatic skills of virtuosity, having a clear mental image of the work and hence playing from memory, which will aid concentration and increase freedom... to mention but a few of the most salient points.[113]

Contradictory strands do however emerge. For example, 'it is natural to want to applaud if we have enjoyed a musical work, though it is sometimes difficult to know whether we are applauding the performer or the music (that is

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[107] Salter, *Going to a Concert*, p.90.

[108] 'Above all things, *do not* attempt to read while the music is in progress, feverishly trying to identify a theme here or a passage there which the writer mentions. It's as fatal as trying to read a map while actually driving a car.' There is something infinitely appealing about the metaphor of musical performance as a journey. Ibid, p.66.

[109] Ibid, p.59-60.

[110] 'For the moment just concentrate on recognising the backbone of the composition: the smaller bones, though fascinating, are not so essential, and they become more apparent as you get to know the work.' Ibid, p.75.

[111] 'Knowledge without feeling produces merely a dry-as-dust pedant for whom (though he may not realise it) music will remain a closed book. Feeling alone... produces the person who "doesn't know anything about music but knows what he likes".' Ibid, p.142.

[112] Salter says that '... singing is in the Englishman's blood'. (Ibid, p.76.) The beginning and end of this chapter make the point that singing is good because you get to know the works better than a mere listener would. Salter does not completely neglect the social aspect: 'Singing together is splendid training in the practice of music - and it's great fun!' (Ibid, p.88).

[113] Ibid, p.90-92 and p.101-102. Salter mentions Toscanini's phenomenal memory for score details on p.16. Note the 'override' rule: 'In the case of soloists... they have to get out of trouble [i.e. if they have a memory lapse] by themselves and conceal any breakdown by their musicianship and quick thinking.' (p.101).

to say, the composer).'[114] An important part of the concert experience is visual: 'What are just disembodied sounds on the air [i.e. on the radio] suddenly come to life in the concert room in the most extraordinary way.'[115] Following the music requires constructing a narrative of a kind, as Salter's favoured metaphor of map-reading – and by implication, journeying – suggests. Again and again, he suggests that what we (see and) hear needs supplementing. What is performed is not just the musical work, but *relationships* between musicians, such as between conductor and orchestra, or accompanist and soloist. I quote at length his insights into the accompanist's role:

> The accompanist's attitude has to be a strange one: he has to immerse himself in what he is playing and, with another part of himself, to remain outside it – to immerse himself so that he can give full rein to his playing and provide a stimulating partnership, and remain apart so that he can analyse the effect and judge what modifications, if any, are necessary actually during a performance. With all these responsibilities, he is also expected to put heart into his soloist if the latter is nervous. He may be feeling just as nervous himself – possibly more so – but were he to show it too there would be no feeling of confidence before the pair stepped on to the platform; and so accompanists as a class steel themselves never to show their qualms.[116]

The first part of this quotation surely applies equally to any soloist. In any case, what we begin to sense here is that performance is not the simple presentation of a work, not a mere serving up, but rather a dialogue. At the level of the individual this is between inside and outside, whereas at the social level it is between insiders – initiated musicians – and outsiders – listeners. In short, performance is an *attitude* to agency, not merely a property of it.

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[114] Ibid, p.94.

[115] Ibid, p.10. Note how the conductor may on the other hand be praised for shutting out the visual element. 'There is one famous conductor of the present day who stands before the orchestra with his eyes shut!' (p.101) Salter does not point out how this behaviour *exemplifies* an attitude towards the music – one of spiritual uplift and quasi-religious disembodiment – and as such becomes part of the performance. Taruskin, following Lydia Goehr, would refer to this as an appeal to transcendentalism. See Taruskin, *Text and Act,* p.17.

[116] Salter, *Going to a Concert,* p.100.

The modernist position Salter's book argues for is about an impossible purity. It represents the opposite pole from Small. This points forward to some questions I will address below: are we dealing here with one tradition or two (or more)? Is the history of performance best captured in the metaphors of competition, a dialectic of weakness and strength, a cycle of emergence and decline?

History or Histories?

Let me propose a skeletal history. The concert, in the guise of the piano recital, has become a relatively stable, predictable site of activity. Its emergence in the nineteenth century is in essence a crystallisation, as the work moves centre stage and pushes out improvisational genres (such as variations on operatic tunes), heterogeneous programming which mixed vocal, ensemble and novelty/acrobatic elements, and displays of athletic skill ('virtuosity') on the part of the pianist. Liszt is credited with the invention of the recital – the term was used by him in 1840 for a number of concerts in London – but the solo piano recital was not by any means central to mid nineteenth-century concert life.[117] It was the next generation of pianists who firmed up a precedent into the genre we now recognise. Anton Rubenstein's 'historical recitals' and the similar projects of Bulow, Pauer, Busoni and many others in the 1860s and after were significant in this respect. At the same time the venues of drawing room, salon and concert hall each attracted different musical repertoires. For example, Pauer included an evening of 'drawing room music' in one of his historical recitals.[118] Publishing houses also played their part in encouraging musicians to standardise their repertories by making available editions of accepted great composers. The rise of music appreciation and an aesthetic of music as a poetic, objectivised 'language' (following Hanslick), a civic pride in measurable achievement and

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[117] *The Cambridge Companion to the Piano*, ed. David Rowland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), especially chapters 4 and 7 (see following footnotes for further details).
[118] Dorothy De Val and Cyril Ehrlich, 'Repertory and Canon', in Rowland, *Cambridge Companion to the Piano*, p.117-134, p.129.

the emergence of a work-leisure distinction into which concert-going slotted all neatly contribute to this development.[119]

Kenneth Hamilton's version of this period is as follows. Firstly, he notes:

> The golden era of Romantic pianism lasted roughly 100 years, the famous musical duel between Liszt and Thalberg in 1837, and the death of Paderewski (the most highly paid concert pianist of all time) in 1941 being convenient, if slightly arbitrary, markers at either end.[120]

But his chapter is titled 'The Virtuoso Tradition', and he distances himself from the distinction commonly made (nowadays perhaps less so) between a notion of virtuosity as tasteless display versus performance as 'playing that somehow metaphysically exposes the soul of the music without drawing attention to technical accomplishment'.[121] Instead, he emphasises collaboration and integrity in pianistic approaches during this period.[122] Further to this, his discussion of 'How They Played' concerns itself with general stylistic traits.[123]

In fact, Hamilton's discussion tends to hide the tensions between two different types of foregrounding: of the composition/composer, and the performance/performer and how they intermingled. In discussing Liszt's performing practice, he points out that 'there can be little doubt that Liszt pioneered the art of faithfully interpreting masterworks at the same time as he was giving demonstrations of the art of Romantic exaggeration. The contradictions were fundamental to the man'.[124] The contradictions were, on Hamilton's evidence, fundamental to performing practice generally, but he offers little purchase on *why* this is so, or why 'the virtuoso tradition' emerged and declined when he claims it did (and the nervous qualification of 'slightly

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[119] Rowland, *Cambridge Companion to the Piano*. See also Janet Ritterman, 'Piano Music and the Public Concert, 1800-1850', in *The Cambridge Companion to Chopin*, ed. Jim Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p.11-31.

[120] Kenneth Hamilton, 'The Virtuoso Tradition', in Rowland, *Cambridge Companion to the Piano*, p.57-74, p.57.

[121] Ibid, p.57.

[122] Ibid, p.66.

[123] Ibid, p.69. Hamilton also discusses the interesting epistemological problem of the status of piano roll recordings as authentic performances.

arbitrary markers' in the quotation above demonstrates his awareness of this). He concludes that 'the virtuoso tradition emphasised the uniqueness of the interpreter along with that of the composition', but what are we to make of this, beyond its surface affirmation?

Dahlhaus provides us with a rather richer story. He sets up a dialectic structured around the concepts of 'virtuosity' and 'interpretation'[125] and, in keeping with his view that the history of music is primarily and most importantly the history of musical works, locates the rise and eventual demise of the virtuoso tradition in part in compositional practice. For him, 'the heyday of virtuosity began... in the early 1830s and ended in September 1847 when Liszt abandoned his career as a concert pianist.'[126] Liszt succeeded in integrating virtuoso elements into composition, by elaborating materials Dahlhaus varyingly describes as 'modernist', 'revolutionary' and 'primitive' – for example the falling tritonal theme of the Dante sonata – 'in an ever-changing array of masks and guises'.[127] That is to say, the material Liszt starts from is unamenable to the kind of thematic development and extension associated with Viennese classicism; large scale structure is built instead around virtuoso refiguring, together with such ancillary factors as 'excessive' harmonic effects, unusual dissonances, violent changes of key, and formal devices such as the combining of themes.[128] Not only does he distinguish between this 'skeletal' texture of composition and thematic argument; he links this explicitly to two tendencies in performance practice. The former allows arrangement (the pianist as composer), while the latter resists it. He comments:

> In eighteenth and early nineteenth-century concert halls, as in the opera, the virtuoso seemed to represent a musical culture that used musical texts as mere 'scenarios' for performances that focused more on the player or singer

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[124] Ibid, p.73.

[125] Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, trans. J. B. Robinson (California: University of California Press, 1989), p.134. See also Dahlhaus, *Foundations of Music History*, p.135: '... a circumstance can be presented as a structure only to the extent that we regard it as impervious to historical change...'

[126] Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, p.137.

[127] Ibid, p.136.

[128] Ibid, p.136.

> than on the work being played or sung. The text was a function of the performance – its substrate or vehicle – rather than vice versa, the performance being a function of a text which it attempted to interpret.[129]

The integration of virtuoso elements into compositional practice was, then, 'part of a larger process that ultimately caused the virtuoso principle to be supplanted by the interpretation of works.'[130] Virtuosity lived on, but had been effectively sidelined. Dahlhaus is patently not interested in pursuing the history of virtuosity-as-performance-behaviour, having demonstrated its origins in cultural history and its absorption by compositional practice. For him, music history is *music* history, the history of musical works.[131] Richard Taruskin has suggested that Dahlhaus fails to distinguish adequately between 'work fidelity' and 'score fidelity'; in fact he makes him if not directly responsible for, then at least complicit in, a downgrading of the performer to the level of 'corrupter', or even 'deviant'.[132]

As Said suggested, the Hegelian dialectic imposes a metaphor of 'accumulation' on to traditions and this may be inappropriate. His broad preference is for a perspective which privileges performative agency, rather than a reverence for tradition (for example in the form of canons).[133] Lydia Goehr has pursued an approach which links these two concerns. Her well-known book on the 'imaginary museum of musical works' demonstrates how a work-centred concept of performance regulates both our attitudes to music and the social behaviour that accompanies it, painting a picture of concert life that Small would surely sympathise with. She has taken her analysis of the practice of classical music further in an article entitled 'The Perfect Performance of Music and the Perfect Musical Performance'.[134] Performance practice occupies a space

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[129] Ibid, p.138.
[130] Ibid, p.137.
[131] I discuss this again in chapter three.
[132] Taruskin, *Text and Act*, p.11-13.
[133] Said is also interested in the geographical location of practices, as my previous quotation shows. See *Musical Elaborations*, introduction, p.xiv and footnote 87 above.
[134] Lydia Goehr, 'The Perfect Performance of Music and the Perfect Musical Performance', in *new formations: a Journal of Culture/Theory/Politics*, 27, (Winter 1995-6), volume entitled 'Performance Matters', 1-22.

between these two (rather awkwardly labelled) ideal modes, a site where conflicting conceptions are acted out:

> We already know that they [i.e. the two conceptions of performance of the title] came to be expressed through a division between elite and popular forms of classical music practice, most clearly between the practice's orchestral or community-based symphonic tradition that nonetheless stressed the individualistic nature of aesthetic experience, and the individualist, soloistic or virtuoso tradition which nonetheless stressed the social nature of musical experience. But we also know that this division never became so sharp as to allow either conception ever to become wholly or exclusively identified with either tradition.[135]

Goehr differentiates here between 'community' and 'individualistic' traditions – orchestral/choral vs. solo musical performance – and explicitly maps the binary opposition of elite/popular onto each tradition, where 'the perfect performance of music' is identified with the 'solemn, sacred, serious, and sublime aesthetic of the concert hall and the *Werktreue* ideal' whereas the 'perfect musical performance' 'attends to the general, though elusive' dimension of musicianship inherent in a performance whether or not the performance is a performance of a work.'[136] Neither conception can survive on its own, and the denatured purity of concert life as Salter describes it is, in the end, an impossibly extreme position.[137] What moves the practice along, in Goehr's view, is the unique series of challenges which individuals articulate – Glenn Gould is her (radical) example – and it is hence to the idiosyncrasies, the accidents – the *details* – of history that one must return.

Talk of the 'perfection/perfectability' of the practice raises the interesting further question of whether the content of a practice determines its telos. As Goehr presents her case we are encouraged to think of the practice as 'imperfect', driven by conflict and hence in continual oscillation:

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[135] Goehr, 'The Perfect Performance of Music and the Perfect Musical Performance', p.20.
[136] Ibid, quotations from p.6 and p.14 respectively.
[137] Edward Said also describes the concert as an 'extreme' occasion in *Musical Elaborations* (title of chapter one).

> I shall argue that it has been the imperfect character of the practice of classical music which has allowed that practice to sustain at least these two genuinely conflicting conceptions of perfection. Lying behind this argument is the thought that practices are imperfect insofar as they are truly critical, critical in the sense that practices survive their self-deceptive but necessary assertions of perfection and of autonomy by allowing strategies of conflict, criticism, or resistance constantly to keep them in check.[138]

Goehr points to the deep-rooted, long-standing distinction between knowing and doing in human enterprise and the elitist preference for the former in classical music practice.[139] This distinction, with its antagonistic predicates of product and process, will recur again and again in this study. We should remember that Goehr's analysis is firmly grounded in a post-Enlightenment liberal humanist tradition. The temptation to idealise the work and render its performance redundant reminds us that liberalism itself does not exist as a transcendent abstraction, whatever its aspirations to achieving this status: it is embedded in human practices. Goehr's emphasis is on the positive role of conflict in the practice.[140] An implicit telos – the impulse to idealism and perfectability – is evident in her view that 'the perfect performance of music' is a renegade, the underdog that serves to keep the Werktreue ideal in check:

> ... consider those performers who upheld the virtuoso tradition and brought to the public's attention the merits of the perfect musical performance... these performers tried to carve out a complex position in which they accepted the principle of the *Werktreue* ideal but resisted the most stringent demands of the performance conception to which that ideal had become most closely associated. Many performers thus aimed to be both great virtuoso and great *Werktreue* performers at the same time, and they did this by aspiring to produce a perfect performance of music as

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[138] Goehr, 'The Perfect Performance of Music and the Perfect Musical Performance', p.2.
[139] She quotes Boethius aptly on this point: 'How much more admirable... is the science of music in apprehending by reason than in accomplishing by work and deed!' Goehr, 'The Perfect Performance of Music and the Perfect Musical Performance', p.3.
[140] The reminder of Habermas's description of modernism as an unfinished – or rather unfinishable, unending – project is appropriate here. Jürgen Habermas, 'Modernity – an Incomplete Project', in *Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (London: Pluto, 1985), p.10-15.

> they aspired also to produce a perfect musical performance.[141]

In short, the *Werktreue* ideal, whatever pluralities it harbours, has been dominant within this modernist view of the practice.

In closing this section I offer a brief summary of the defining oppositional terms in Goehr's analysis of the perfect performance of music and the perfect musical performance (in each pair the initial term is orientated towards the dominant 'perfect performance of music' practice):

interpretation-centred/performance-centred

disembodied/embodied

transcendence/entertainment

musicality/musicianship

formalism/spontaneity

space/time

Art, Human/art, human

The following three oppositions are also tacitly present:

invisibility/visibility

detachment/commitment, conviction

opportunity/risk

This will serve as a useful (but incomplete) checklist for some key terms which will recur often in this study.[142]

Review: (6) Dunsby's Shared Concerns

Dunsby's book entitled *Performing Music: Shared Concerns*, published in 1995, also sets up a number of binary oppositions which he is at pains to qualify.[143] However, the architecture of his study makes these far less readily apprehensible. Prominent among them is his discussion (and rejection) of

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[141] Goehr, 'The Perfect Performance of Music and the Perfect Musical Performance', p.21-22.

[142] I refer again to John Butt's parallel list of contrastive pairs in his review of Taruskin, *Text and Act*, 'Acting up a text: the scholarship of performance and the performance of scholarship', p.330.

[143] Dunsby has referred to his 'deep distrust of twos rather than threes' on a number of occasions. See 'Acts of Recall', *Musical Times* (January 1997), p.12-17 and 'Fortenotes', *Music Analysis*, 17(1998), 177-181, p.181.

Kerman's distinction between 'doers' and 'talkers'.[144] This Dunsby claims is fundamentally misguided, for as he says at the outset, 'musicians think hard', adding in clarification that 'they do not usually work in some sort of unreflecting musical trance.'[145] Performers have often been active in commenting on what they do and the categorisation that Kerman makes is in his view unmotivated, an unacceptable polarisation. It does not clarify, it mystifies.[146] The unreflecting trance later metamorphoses into an ethical category, the 'Ecstacy school of musical thought', against which he pitches two rather different terms: anxiety, attendant upon risk and what Sarah Martin, in her review calls the 'problem-solving approach'.[147]

> There is an array of perfectly comprehensible conceptual problems confronting the musician – just like the lawyer, the doctor, the priest, the poet – and I believe it is because they are constantly in play that they are not often thought about.[148]

And later he adds: 'There is mystery in music, but still a great deal that needs to be demystified.'[149] These conceptual problems would include acquiring the necessary technique, thinking about matters of history and expression, working through to convictions about these and so on.[150] In fact, in performance, 'getting the right notes in the right order at about the right time is a good start.'[151]

All this seems pragmatic enough, not a philosophical position (as he says elsewhere) but a sound basis for action.[152] But for Dunsby, action is fraught with unease: 'Anxiety and Artistry' (the title of chapter 3), shared 'concerns'... what is he so worried about? Well, as I suggested above, the risks performance entails are so central to its ontology that anxiety needs to be 'put firmly on the

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[144] Dunsby, *Performing Music,* p.47. The reference is to Joseph Kerman, *Musicology* (London: Fontana, 1985), p.196.
[145] Dunsby, *Performing Music,* p.7.
[146] Dunsby, *Performing Music,* p.48.
[147] Ibid, p.29. Sarah Martin's comment is in her review of Dunsby: *Performing Music* and John Rink, ed.: *The Practice of Performance: Studies in Musical Interpretation*, in *Music Analysis*, 17 (1998), 108-121 (p.118).
[148] Dunsby, *Performing Music*, p.11.
[149] Ibid, p.31.
[150] Ibid, p.12.
[151] Ibid, p.7.
[152] Ibid, p.16.

map early on.' 'Music is always a risk for everyone, all the time.'[153] This is because you can get it wrong and be heard (seen, read) to have done so:

> ... I shall attempt [in this book] as musicians do to steer a course between... the devouring monster of human *judgement*, and the whirlpool that threatens to engulf all artistic certainties in the frothing sea of *contingency*.[154]

In short, his 'theory' of performance (though I doubt he would accept this formulation) is text-based, and stiflingly so. In an interesting aside on the performative aspect of writing, he comments that we all have 'flashes of inspiration... from time to time' but 'it's doing something about it that matters. "Doing something about it" is not the same as having the image, but it is what performers must always do.'[155] This 'must' is a pervasive position and the (opening chapters of the) book are thick with obligation (often inadequately met). Against this background Dunsby's point that many people – and by implication he aligns himself with this position – do not 'put composers, performers and writers into any form of destructive pecking order'[156] seems to me inconsistent, perhaps even disingenuous, for all the qualifications he acknowledges to the current division of musical labour.

Elsewhere, Dunsby has drawn attention to the oddly composite nature of academic performance studies, commenting on a tendency towards fragmentation into historical, perceptual, sociological and theoretical subdisciplines.[157] In *Performing Music: Shared Concerns* these different discourses appear more harmonious through their single author presentation than Dunsby might have intended (though, as he points out at the beginning, his wish is to address a general audience). But the final chapter of his book is a detailed analysis of a short piano piece by Stravinsky and is designed to demonstrate what performers (should?) think about and how. While Dunsby had previously affirmed that there is no easy move from analysis to performance, his

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[153] Ibid, p.41 and p.14 respectively.
[154] Ibid, p.16.
[155] Ibid, p.1-2.
[156] Ibid, p.3.
[157] Dunsby, 'Acts of Recall', p.12.

conclusions in *Performing Music* do rather point in the opposite direction: the kind of thinking the performer needs to do turns out to be pointedly analytical.[158] Perhaps one can pursue this line of thought further: is Sarah Martin fair in her criticism that Dunsby appears to be driven by a need to render performance reliant on scholarship? This raises the issue of Dunsby's status and background as a musician: a highly respected pianist who opted out of a performing career early on, an equally respected academic with a sheaf of major publications on music analysis, a Schoenberg scholar of repute, he does not carry the weight of (conservative, modernist) Tradition lightly.[159] At the same time he is peremptorily dismissive of interdisciplinary approaches. His rootedness within the discipline(s) of musicology/theory/analysis simultaneously narrows the focus.[160]

Underlying this is a double bind and it forces Dunsby to hedge his bets. The surge in interest in performance is intimately linked to a disaffection with just this kind of discipline-centred conservatism. Interdisciplinarity and the study of performance (in the widest sense) have become established means of qualifying and revising exhausted approaches.

Fragmentation and Crisis

What I hope this introductory section has conveyed is a sense of the variety of reactions there have been to a widely perceived crisis in the practice of musical performance. Performance studies are undeniably and irredeemably interdisciplinary in nature, with important contributions from academic music (including theory, pedagogy, psychology, history and popular music studies)

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[158] See Jonathan Dunsby's earlier assertion of this point of view in, 'Guest Editorial: Performance and Analysis of Music', *Music Analysis,* 8 (1989), 5-20, (p.7). The final chapter of *Performing Music* ends with frank ambivalence: see the discussion of quotations from Kretzschmar and Rachmaninoff in *Performing Music,* p.93-94.

[159] Dunsby's pianistic background may not be as familiar to musicologists as his academic work. For some details, see Wendy Thompson with Fanny Waterman, *Piano Competition: The Story of Leeds* (London: Faber, 1990), p.11.

[160] On interdisciplinary approaches, see Dunsby, *Performing Music,* p.46. He declines to comment on popular music or the pedagogical field (except in passing on p.27); and is pointedly unsympathetic to Jerrold Levinson's work (from the field of analytical aesthetics) in chapter two.

and neighbouring disciplines, such as analytical aesthetics, literary theory, and anthropology. In fact the list is very long, if not quite endless. Hence, we should expect to encounter materials from other disciplines.

As a theoretical undertaking, a study of the concept of performance is bound to be descriptive in the Steinerian sense: practice will indeed run ahead of theory.[161] But at the same time its descriptions will require a systematic underpinning. If theorising about performance partakes of hermeneutics, it best does so with an attention to definitional logic. The binary oppositions of structuralism – especially the opposition of the systematic to the historical – are ultimately unavoidable.

The following four chapters are arranged as follows. I begin with an investigation of the notion of a *practice*, drawn from ethics. This provides a social/ethical framework for the two central chapters, which discuss definitions of two key concepts in the field: first I look at the concept of *performance*, then *interpretation*. In the final chapter I return to the question of the 'crisis' in both the practice of performance and the ways in which it is conceptualised in performance studies. The emphasis, particularly in the central chapters, is on the systematic, as opposed to the historical.

I would like at this point to introduce a cautionary note. It has not been possible in this opening chapter to present a traditional 'literature review' because the field, as I have conceived it, is simply too wide. More detailed discussions of literature will inevitably occur within the study itself, topic by topic. This approach has some disadvantages. In particular, each chapter will tend to progress from a similar starting point and this might suggest an overall lack of direction. The point however is to watch for the way themes – such as the opposition of process to product – recur, intersecting in unpredictable ways. The investigations I present below are also incomplete and provisional to varying degrees. The essay on the practice and virtue theory could bear expansion to thesis length in itself: it does not pretend to achieve firm conclusions, particularly on the question of the relationship of ethics to the human imagination. What I offer there (in the two case studies I present) are

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[161] Dunsby, *Performing Music*, p.19.

instances of how the line of enquiry might be pursued. In the concluding chapter I draw together some of the loose ends which my investigations of practice. performance and interpretation produce. I also briefly touch on the question of music's origins and the nature of musicianship and musicality. There is an important connection to be made here between practice(s) and the ethos that they embody and these discipline-specifics: there is much work to be done to connect threads of argument here. Finally, I would mention the difficulty involved in straddling the divide which separates general theoretical discussion from those passages which deal directly with music: it is perhaps this factor, more than any other which leads me to characterise what follows as preliminary and provisional. It should be read as an invitation and spur to further speculation.

Chapter Two: The Practice

Part One: Theory

Works, Occasions, Agents

So far I have broadly distinguished between two approaches to performance, which could be called work-centred and occasion-centred. Roughly speaking, the theories of Barnett, Dahlhaus and Dunsby count as examples of the work-centred approach; Lazarus, Small and Heister offer occasion-centred analyses. Goehr has written at length on the origins and limitations of the work-centred approach – which, as it is now situated historically deserves the description 'practice' – and has proposed a dialectic which drives the practice forward. What I will attempt to do in what follows is to examine agency more closely: to look inside the performer herself. Where, when and how does she acquire her performance strategies and values? I suggest we look to the concept of the practice for answers to these questions.

The Practice in the Discourses of Musicology and the Philosophy of Art

Although the term 'practice' has been in common use for generations – for example in the phrase 'the theory and practice of...' – it appears to have entered musicology in its current more freighted sense in the late 1980s, at a time when the discipline was reassessing its achievements. Here is one of the routes I believe it took. The analytic moral philosopher Alasdair Macintyre's book *After Virtue,* which first appeared in 1981, took an arguably tired and diluted concept with a lengthy history in sociology (often Marxist) and anthropology and reinvigorated it by giving it a strong moral impetus.[1] His work

[1] Alasdair Macintyre, *After Virtue* (London: Duckworth, 1981; second edition 1985).

was taken up by, among others, Nicholas Wolterstorff, another analytic philosopher this time working in the field of aesthetics. He published an article which adapted Macintyre's insights to the practice of musical composition, in the process quoting at some length from *After Virtue*.[2] This piece, published in 1987, appeared in a collection whose contributors were predominantly, though not exclusively, Anglo-American philosophers of an analytical bent, a collection intended as an introduction to music-philosophical topics. (Incidentally, Wolterstorff published an article which covers some of the same ground from a different perspective – the history of the philosophy of art – intended for philosophers at about the same time.[3]) It seems that this refurbished concept of the practice provoked considerable interest thereafter. For example an article entitled 'Art, Practice and Narrative' by Noël Carroll which appeared in 1988 makes transparent use of Macintyre's ideas – though without direct acknowledgement – in a renewed assault on the topic of defining art.[4] It seems likely that the musicologist Lawrence Kramer's use of the term 'practice' in the title of his 1990 book was, if not an appropriation of Macintyre filtered through Wolterstorff, Carroll and others, then at least a response to a contemporary debate about a term newly fashionable.[5]

It is clear that Macintyre's ideas were not simply plucked out of the air: they made cogent sense in an intellectual climate among this community of American philosophers who had for some time been seeking out new ways of

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[2] See 'The Work of Making a Work of Music', in *What is Music? An Introduction to the Philosophy of Music*, ed. Philip Alperson (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1987, reprinted with updated bibliography 1994), p.101-129. The collection also contains contributions by Roger Scruton and Edward T. Cone, among others. Also relevant here is Wolterstorff's essay 'Philosophy of Art after Analysis and Romanticism', in *Analytic Aesthetics*, ed. Richard Shusterman (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), p.32-58. The art critic Susie Gablik has also drawn attention to Macintyre's work in *Has Modernism Failed?* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1984). Another article of related interest is by Robert Martin, 'Musical Works in the Worlds of Performers and Listeners', to be found in *The Interpretation of Music: Philosophical Essays*, ed. Michael Krausz (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p.119-127.

[3] Special issue of *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* published in late 1987.

[4] 'Art, Practice, and Narrative', from *The Monist*, 71 (1988), 140-156. Carroll's later work on this topic includes 'Historical Narratives and the Philosophy of Art', from *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 51 (1993), 313-326, which refers to both the Wolterstorff articles mentioned above, thereby establishing an indirect link with Macintyre; and the more recent *Philosophy of Art: A Contemporary Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1999), especially chapter 5. (See also footnote 12 below.)

[5] Lawrence Kramer, *Music as Cultural Practice, 1800-1900* (California: University of California Press, 1990).

theorising artistic activity.[6] In particular, philosophers interested in tackling the age-old questions surrounding art's ontology found the concept of the practice immediately useful. Noël Carroll has recently expanded his earlier accounts of the history of art ontology in a way which demonstrates clearly why philosophers were ready to take up Macintyre's ideas.[7] Answers to the question 'What is Art?' have, he claims, provoked a series of responses over the last hundred years, each of which in turn has been supplanted as it proved inadequate to account for innovation. He distinguishes four phases in his historically organised narrative. These are:

1. 'Stage one' essentialism (including Bell, Croce, Collingwood, Tolstoy and Langer). This approach attempts to identify the primary features of objects which allow them to be classified as art (such as Bell`s 'significant form`).

2. The open concept approach. This makes use of Wittgenstein`s 'family resemblance' idea and was popularised in the 1950s by Morris Weitz in particular.

3. The institutional theory of art. This exists in various versions, but was initially proposed by George Dickie in the early 1970s. It suggests that the institutions of the artworld confer artwork status on objects and processes. (Carroll calls this 'stage two essentialism' because although there is a definitional component it does not refer to internal features of artworks.)

4. The self-reflexive, narrative-driven practice, proposed by Carroll himself. I quote his words in clarification:

> Our view – of art as a cultural practice – attempts to negotiate through the pitfalls of previous theorizing. It does not foreclose artistic innovation while it does attend to the generative processes through which objects enter the realm of art. In some ways, it resembles the institutional approach; however, it does not claim that art is an institution but only makes the less ambitious observation that it is a cultural practice. Also, it regards the question of

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[6] Carroll situates himself within an Anglo-American tradition of analytic philosophy, one concerned primarily with the analysis of concepts – specifically the search for necessary and sufficient conditions – and their use within practices. See the introduction to his *Philosophy of Art* (p.2-5).

[7] In *Philosophy of Art*.

> whether an object is art as one internal to the cultural practices of the artworld and goes on discussing the coherence of that practice.[8]

Carroll points out that art is not just one but a 'cluster' of related practices, noting in particular the distinction between 'makers' and 'receivers'.[9] He further points to the need for a practice to reproduce itself over time, in order to achieve stability. Against this, it needs a mechanism to allow change and here he suggests the key is the stories a practice tells itself about what it is doing. New art, he says, will be judged as art according to how it *repeats, amplifies or repudiates* what has gone before: this is the practice as a kind of Hegelian conversation.[10] 'The unity', he says, 'of this sort of entity [he is talking specifically of a nation, but the argument is meant to apply equally to a practice] is best captured by an historical narrative, one which shows the ways in which its past and present are integrated.'[11] Carroll's argument, restated in its recent extended form is precisely the kind of narrative he suggests is at the heart of a practice's self-understanding. I provide these details of Carroll's theory as a foretaste of Macintyre's own account to which they are, as I hope will subsequently become clear, indebted.[12]

So my interest in the practice in its Macintyrian (dis)guise is anything but novel. However Wolterstorff, Carroll and others are principally interested in

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[8] Carroll, 'Art Practice and Narrative', p.143.

[9] Carroll, 'Art, Practice, and Narrative', p.144. The distinction between 'performative' and 'critical' interpretation I will introduce in chapter four is a clear parallel within the realm of interpretation. See Jerrold Levinson, 'Performative vs. Critical Interpretation in Music' in ed. Krausz, *The Interpretation of Music: Philosophical Essays*, p.33-60.

[10] Carroll, 'Art, Practice, and Narrative', p.148.

[11] Carroll, 'Art, Practice, and Narrative', p.150.

[12] The similarities between Carroll and Macintyre are striking. Here is Carroll's definition: 'The sense of cultural practice I have in mind here is that of a complex body of interrelated human activities governed by reasons internal to those forms of activity and to their coordination. Practices are aimed at achieving goods that are appropriate to the forms of activity that comprise them, and these reasons and goods, in part, situate the place of the practice in the life of the culture. Such practices supply the frameworks in which human powers are developed and expanded.' ('Art, Practice, and Narrative', p.143.) Here is Macintyre: 'By a practice I am going to mean any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realised in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and the human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended.' (*After Virtue*, p.187.) Carroll's paraphrase shows a slight change of emphasis (there is less space for the Aristotelian ethic, the search for the good).

art ontology. I will argue that Macintyre's theory is eminently suited to an agent-centred analysis of performance. In doing so I will be foregrounding the role of virtues, along with skills and natural capacities. Virtue plays a central element of Macintyre's theorising which goes largely unregarded in the work I have discussed so far.

The Practice in the Discourses of Musicology and Anthropology

Musicology itself is more or less distantly related to numerous disciplines and practices. Ethnomusicology has always been close to anthropology. There have been a number of interdisciplinary studies of Western art music practices and institutions by anthropologists with musical training (or vice versa): Georgina Born's study on IRCAM is a recent example.[13] I have already commented on the work of Christopher Small who, though not a trained anthropologist, is equally inspired by anthropological concerns, among which analysis of how ritual shores up authority in society is central. Henry Kingsbury has published an anthropological study of the conservatory, to which I now turn.

I have saved discussion of Kingsbury's work for now because the issues he raises also pertain to the Macintyrean concept of the practice I wish to develop later. Kingsbury's premises are, however, radically at odds with Macintyre's in one important respect. By examining his study before giving a detailed account of Macintyre's views, I hope to expose some exaggerations in Kingsbury's fundamentally sound approach, in order to point up the value of the rival account.[14]

I begin with some background. It helps to know that Kingsbury trained as a pianist and occupied the post of Assistant Dean at a prestigious American music college from 1969-71, leaving 'in a spirit of confusion regarding both the musical and educational work I had been doing'.[15] His experiences as a teacher

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[13] Georgina Born, *Rationalizing Culture: IRCAM, Boulez, and the Institutionalization of the Musical Avant-Garde* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).
[14] Henry Kingsbury, *Music, Talent, and Performance: a Conservatory Cultural System* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988).
[15] Kingsbury, *Music, Talent, and Performance*, p.8.

and councillor had alerted him to gaping discrepancies between the behaviour and professed beliefs of musicians, especially regarding the social significance of 'absolute' music. He subsequently studied ethnomusicology and socio-cultural anthropology and the conservatory project which he undertook in the early 1980s was informed by methodologies he encountered in those fields. A revelatory experience was his reading of Edmund Leach, who proposed that anthropologists should abandon what Leach saw as a spurious distinction between ethics and aesthetics: 'Logically aesthetics and ethics are identical. If we are to understand the ethical rules of a society, it is aesthetics we should study.'[16] Kingsbury says of this:

> Such a formulation presented a succinct model for bringing together my experiences at Midland [the pseudonym he uses for the college he worked at]... the profound connection between the musicality and the self-identity of the music students – and the idea... that musical values *must* be understood as emanations of social and cultural processes.[17] [My italics.]

The tone and logic of this project will be familiar from Christopher Small's work. Kingsbury is inspired by an attempt to make sense of a perceived hypocrisy, to retell a story of his experience to himself and others that justifies his professional disaffection. In saying this, I do not intend to devalue his account by suggesting that it is merely self-serving. Rather, this narrative strategy is, as will become apparent, important in its own right. But I *would* question the assumption that musical values are *necessarily* to be understood in socio-cultural terms. This is surely overly reductive: it represents but one option among several.

A consequence of this reductive approach is for Kingsbury to question what music itself is and conclude that 'rather than having a fixed and generally

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[16] Edmund Leach, *Political Systems of Highland Burma: a Study of Kachin Social Structure* (London: Athlone Press, 1977), p.12, quoted in Kingsbury, *Music, Talent, and Performance*, p.10.
[17] Kingsbury, *Music, Talent, and Performance*, p.10.

understood referent in the real world, it [the word "music"] is highly shifting and indeterminate in meaning.'[18] In consequence,

> When one asks what it is that conservatory students and teachers are talking about when they refer to music, the music itself, or the actual music, one answer is that to a considerable extent they're talking about *each other*, either as individuals or as groups, formally or informally organized: they are talking about intercontextualized, configured social relationships.[19]

This leads him to conclude that

> ... musical performance (including in this the social relations obtaining in the performance situation: relations of power), musical meaning, and musical structure are linked in a nexus in which each aspect is both product and producer of the others.[20]

Music is highly, but, note, not *completely* indeterminate in meaning; and if music's meaning is socially constructed – and this entails as a positive consequence a degree of freedom in principle to make it 'mean' what we want it to – this is only *to a considerable extent* the case. What of the remainder? Kingsbury does not really address the implied question about music's intrinsic meaning directly (except on one occasion, which I discuss below). Generally, then, there is very little positivity in the socially constructed meanings Kingsbury uncovers and no real space for any other kind of meaning to emerge. In other words, he paints a rather one-sided, bleak picture of conservatory life.

Kingsbury's study is based on field work he carried out as a more or less disguised student observer at a well-known conservatory for one semester.[21] His book organises its material thematically, starting with background information such as his personal motivation, methodological issues and the problem of objectivity in particular. As I have already hinted, his aim is to look past the 'music' at social structures and relationships that contextualise it: 'I tried to

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[18] Ibid, p.26.
[19] Ibid, p.158.
[20] Ibid, p.110.

observe every social interaction in terms of the question "what is at issue here?" to see what was being negotiated. decided, clarified. altered, maintained – what was in contention, in doubt.'[22] In the following chapters he examines the conservatory's physical and institutional setting; the notion of talent and the problematic metaphor of 'possessing' it; the teaching process itself. in a masterclass setting; the examination ritual and the accompanying changes of status associated with professionalisation and membership of an elite: and in a final section a recapitulation of the general issues raised at the outset in the light of what has been said in the interim.

When Kingsbury talks of a 'cultural idiom' or of a 'cultural system' I take these terms to be roughly synonymous with the practice.[23] Its constituents are composers, performers, compositions, audiences, musicologists. critics and 'highly formalised private teacher-student dyads'.[24] He comments in passing that this list could be considerably extended, adding that 'much work needs to be done if we are to understand the interplay between economic competition and philanthropic benefaction in musical culture'.[25] Kingsbury makes the useful point that these close teacher-student relationships, along with the tendency for a teacher's class to form a clique, are in direct conflict with rational administrative principles, which treat individuals as standardised units: '... the value of artistic individualism and the patronage structure that maintains it are in direct conflict with the principles and workings of a bureaucratic administrative structure'.[26] These are again points to be borne in mind when we examine Macintyre's account.

There is often a strong sense of vocation for those who choose a musical training, but there are by no means enough professional opportunities for conservatory graduates.[27] Hence the institution is inevitably concerned with its self-perpetuation, the more so, since there are no simple economic justifications

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[21] This was January to June, 1982. Ibid, p.20.

[22] Ibid, p.24. The catalogue of linguistic/behavioural functions here could be labelled 'performative' within the discipline of linguistics (or pragmatics): they could be analysed as 'speech acts'. See my discussion of this in chapter three below.

[23] Ibid, p.17 and title, respectively.

[24] Ibid, p.17-18.

[25] Ibid, p.183, endnote 4.

[26] Ibid, p.37 (the final point of his four point summary of the chapter).

for its existence. What it tries to inculcate in students are not necessarily skills of use in a 'career', but rather an ethos of individualism: Kingsbury argues that the attachment students have to individual teachers encourages an individualistic training stressing solo performance ability, which in turn encourages the staff, who serve to an extent as role models, to be highly individualistic in their teaching styles. (Note that this varies in appropriateness from a professional perspective, being more suited to pianists than orchestral players.) Success for the student reflects well on both student and teacher, which ultimately makes for a charged, competitive atmosphere of study.

The central portion of his book examines the notion of talent. He demonstrates the difficulty in quantifying it, citing inconsistent judgements and the role peers and mentors play in constructing a student's self-image. If teachers or examiners say a student has talent, that will tend to set up expectations and in extreme cases it can amount to a self-fulfilling prophecy. Kingsbury also argues compellingly that the converse is true: it is very difficult for a student to perform well to an audience which holds the performer in low esteem.[28] What this suggests is that not only the player should be committed, but – intriguingly – also the audience. For Kingsbury talent is a construct, a 'cultural representation', a mental quality only accessible through performance. In proposing its existence *behind* the sum of an individual's performances, we propose a potential for development;[29] but ultimately, he says,

> An assessment of musicality or talent is not something that is ever proved or disproved. Rather, it is validated with reference to the same social process in which it first arose. An assessment of musical talent is an aesthetic judgement. An aesthetic judgement of musical performance is a statement that is evaluative of a person or persons. Here we see the full force of Leach's dictum... regarding the relationship between ethics and aesthetics.[30]

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[27] Ibid, p.19.
[28] Ibid, chapter five, 'A Song in a Strange Land'.
[29] Ibid, p.63.
[30] Ibid, p.75. The relationship between ethics and aesthetics proposed here is open to challenge: it leads to a reductive circularity in describing behaviour.

Talent, then, is 'a concept frequently used to explain something that couldn't be explained otherwise'.[31] However, talent is perhaps too useful a term, even given these limitations, to jettison, in use not just in music but across the whole educational spectrum. We need it precisely to be able to evaluate a realm between individual performances and individuals per se.

Of further interest is his report on the masterclass.[32] What, indeed, is at issue here? Kingsbury tries to describe the conflicting loyalties of students, on the one hand to a score which contains considerable indeterminacy and on the other to their own feelings and intuitions about how to perform and the guidance they receive from the teacher. The teacher summarises this conflict as follows: '[students] must not play something simply because it is written in the score, but rather because they feel it that way.'[33] If you don't feel it, you don't express it. Technique, in other words, means nothing without feeling, which renders it expressive. But the teacher Kingsbury observes in the masterclass situation actually insists on obedience to what *he* feels is the right way.[34] Thus the student is – apparently – caught in a double bind: she has to obey someone else's impulses and present them as personally authentic.[35] For Kingsbury this is evidence that musical performance skill can be seen to be both product and producer of social power. And the teacher controls the class. As far as the relationship between musical 'structure', performance and meaning is concerned, he has this to say:

> … the study of music in the contexts of performance and rendition suggests the conclusion that "music" doesn't "have" a meaning, but rather that music is *given* a meaning in performance. By the same token, the study of music in performance brings with it the realisation that "music" doesn't "have" structure, so much as it is given structure in performance. Musical structure is not a phenomenon that leads its own existence outside of social action; rather, it is a notion that is variously invoked, appealed to, or cited in

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[31] Ibid, p.81.
[32] Ibid, ch.4, 'Lessons with the Master', p.85-110.
[33] Ibid, p.87.
[34] This is in the context of a discussion of Beethoven's C major cello sonata. Ibid, p.98.
[35] Later I will argue that the double bind is both real and necessary.

the context of social action.[36]

Difficult though it is to refute this point of view, it does seem to me to overstate the case. An insightful interpretation is being made to work just a little too hard and I will offer one criticism of it here. An instrumental teacher – in one-to-one lessons and even more in the masterclass environment, where the audience in a sense amplifies every gesture – teaches *exemplifications* of how to arrive at an individual interpretation. (Ultimately, exemplifications are all one can teach, as no copy will be completely successful: the distinction to bear in mind is in the student's attitude to imitation.[37]) I was told by one professor that he deliberately taught an 'orthodox' interpretation of the mainstream literature; and his students were in fact frequently quite taken aback when they heard him perform in concert in a highly idiosyncratic manner. (He added that students would be free to play how they liked after graduation.[38]) So you might better describe the process of teaching an interpretation as a form of guided trial and error, where the teacher's role is to demonstrate virtues such as the self-critical faculty, patience, or persistence.

I hinted at a rather different criticism in the paragraph above: Kingsbury does not really investigate the private world of the 'teacher-student dyad'. Indeed, this may not be possible at all. What he has observed is a 'performance' of teaching. This raises the interesting question of what the true purpose of a masterclass is, and whether the format satisfies these purposes. I would argue that as a 'performance' genre, it often fails because it attempts too much. A masterclass can be judged from too many perspectives simultaneously. The sheer range of 'interests' at issue in the masterclass scenario necessarily involves faking – for example the student already has strong performance convictions about the piece; or the 'master' entertains the audience with his own expertise as a player or musical analyst – and there is inevitably a sense of compromise and incoherence. Kingsbury himself points out the theatrical

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[36] Ibid, p.109-110.

[37] Charles Rosen's comments on the *necessarily* individual nature of technique have some bearing on this. Charles Rosen, 'On Playing the Piano', *The New York Review of Books*, Oct. 21, 1999, p.49-54, especially p.49.

exaggerations, the fierce energy, the rhetorical devices used by the teacher to maintain control over the large group assembled in the studio. However, the relative privacy of one-to-one tuition means that a student is far more disposed to take risks and try new ideas because there is less face-saving necessary if he fails. It is effectively, one short step away from practising. The hermeneutic circle of music-making and feeling is one in which the feelings occur in the act of trying out the music and reflecting on the effect it has on the player, the affect it produces: the player becomes her own audience. It is real experimentation – practising, no less – and no student could reasonably be expected to experiment openly in this way in the public glare of a masterclass, not least because it is so time-consuming. Elsewhere Kingsbury says that 'the notions of performance, rendition and practice form a continuum of overlapping categories, and distinctions among them are made by musicians with regard to social context or frame.'[39] In other words, the categorisation of these overlapping categories has to do with the degree of performativity; and this in turn depends on the presence of a judging audience.

I welcome Kingsbury's central points, which I would summarise as follows:

1. Key concepts in use in the field are employed inconsistently, manipulated by those in power to their own advantage; and that this inconsistency often goes unrecognised and unchallenged.

2. There is a conflict of interest between the supporting institutions and the individuals within them.

3. Musical meaning is to an extent a reflection of social relationships.

I think there are positive consequences of this state of affairs which he overlooks. It is widely accepted that human beings do not organise their conceptual worlds in terms of definitions which list necessary and sufficient conditions, just as it is recognised that such efforts at definition are often both necessary and helpful. The very imprecision of such terms as 'talent', 'musicality' and 'music' allows space for renegotiating their meanings, in the

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[38] Professor Herbert Seidel, at the Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst in Frankfurt/Main, Germany.

[39] Kingsbury, *Music, Talent, and Performance*, p.187, endnote 1.

light of changing needs. This is an ongoing process. At the same time, education relies on reification and standardisation in order to function. Kingsbury is wrong to collapse ethics into aesthetics because the distinction between intentions (and the concepts that inform them) and observed behaviour is a useful one. The claim that human behaviour is adequately described through descriptions of what can be seen from outside alone – and that is the ultimate implication of the collapsing of ethics into aesthetics – is a remnant of behaviourist psychology. As such it has largely been discredited by more recent cognitivist approaches.[40] Its status as a mental concept may render it unclear exactly what, say, 'musicality' is, in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions, but there is broad agreement about many of its components, for example among music psychologists. (They, too, deal of necessity in generalisations.) Such terms function as a useful, if potentially misleading, shorthand in a practice. Without this slackness, practices would be frozen into mere repetitiousness. (The point that administrators require precisely this obviously encourages a degree of conflict.) I return to these points below (in **A Note on Concepts**). For this reason, among others, I am loath to accept Kingsbury's rather grim picture of conservatory life within which students are awarded victim status.

This brings me on to the third point. Surely there is a positive motivation for the student studying music, one which points beyond social relationships? How, if not through some notion of 'the pleasure of the text'[41] and its study in and for itself, can we otherwise account for the fact that so many people want to study musical performance even though there are indeed far too few professional opportunities for those who are trained?

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[40] For a more general discussion of definitions of the term 'aesthetics', see Carroll, *Philosophy of Art*, p.156-168.

[41] It is such an appeal to motivation that Jim Samson makes at the end of his article 'Analysis in Context' in *Rethinking Music,* eds. Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p.33-54 (see p.54). The phrase 'pleasure of the text' originates with

I have proposed that we retain the traditional division between ethics and aesthetics in our investigation of performance practice, keeping a weather eye open for conflicts between them. It is, after all, a division which arose in response to the creation of an autonomous sphere of art in the eighteenth century.[42] If we accept the division, as I propose to, we may ask which ethical theory, of the many available, will yield the best results.[43] Consider the following, by no means exhaustive, list:

1. Rule-driven theories, which attempt to derive ethics from the application of logical imperatives. As Kant's work attempts this in a particularly thoroughgoing way, this strand of ethics is often associated with his name. A characteristic question such theories pose would be: how far is individual freedom compatible with social justice? This strand of (deontic) ethical theory is often interested in the notion of a contract between social parties (as an example, consider John Rawls's work).[44] Jeffrey Kallberg's discussion of genres as stabilising contracts within the composer/performer/audience cluster is an implicit application of this approach. Peter Kivy has accorded it more extensive treatment, arguing that a composer's intentions should – and in practice do – play a role in interpretative practice.[45]

Barthes.

[42] For overviews of this field, see Andrew Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity from Kant to Nietzsche* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990) and Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990).

[43] For more detailed orientation on ethical theories the following are useful: *A Companion to Ethics*, ed. Peter Singer (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), which contains introductory essays on all the theoretical approaches mentioned here. The essay on virtue theory is by Greg Pence (p.249-259). A rather different perspective on ethics is provided by Mark L. Johnson's essay 'Ethics', in *A Companion to Cognitive Science,* eds. William Bechtel and George Graham (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), p.691-701. His examination of the compatibility of modern ethical theories with the state of knowledge in cognitive science is highly critical of the overtly 'rational' approaches described in points 1 and 2 in the text and broadly endorses the work of Macintyre and virtue theory.

[44] John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972).

[45] Jeffrey Kallberg, 'The Rhetoric of Genre: Chopin's Nocturne in G minor', in *Chopin at the Boundaries: Sex, History and Musical Genre* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 3-29. Kivy's essay entitled 'Live performers and dead composers: On the ethics of musical interpretation' is collected in his book *The Fine Art of Repetition: Essays in the Philosophy of Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p.95-116.

2. Utilitarianism and its favoured modern offspring Consequentialism try to evaluate behaviour by comparing outcomes. This entails knowing which outcome is best before we act: in other words, it requires a highly determinate – ideally singular – definition of the good(s) it aims to achieve. However, within the practices of the arts there is no consensus about purposes.

3. Virtue theory tries to pin down the qualities an individual requires to achieve goods. I would argue that this focus on the individual makes it a promising candidate for analysing performance.

These theories are certainly not mutually exclusive. Furthermore, the possibility of using any one mode to complement or critique any other is itself a valuable resource. So we should expect 'contracts' and rules to be implicit within traits or concepts, or for contracts to base themselves in turn on more or less unexamined motives. With these qualifications firmly in mind I would like to proceed to a detailed examination of Alasdair Macintyre's notion of the practice and the role of the virtues therein.

Macintyre's Concept of the Practice: (1) a Definition

In his book *After Virtue*,[46] Alisdair Macintyre proposes the definition of the practice (which I quoted above) which makes an explicit connection with the exercise of the virtues:

> By a 'practice' I am going to mean any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realised in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved are systematically extended.[47]

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[46] Alasdair Macintyre, *After Virtue* (London: Duckworth, 1981; second edition 1985). All references are to the second edition.

[47] Macintyre, *After Virtue*, p.187. See footnote 12 above for my original citation.

A practice thus involves 'standards of excellence and obedience to rules as well as achievement of goods'.[48] Virtues are those qualities which we possess and exercise in achieving the goods internal to practices. Intention and behaviour help to define each other and a setting is necessary to make an intention clear. But, as Macintyre argues, a setting entails a history. This is the chronological dimension of a practice: its tradition. One virtue participants will require is a critical respect for that tradition. The performer, as an individual, has intentions in terms of her own history and the history of her practice. So 'narrative history of a certain kind turns out to be the basic and essential genre for the characterisation of human actions'.[49] To this Macintyre adds the conditions of intelligibility and accountability:

> To identify an occurrence as an action is... to identify it... as flowing intelligibly from an agent's intentions, motives, passions and purposes. It is therefore to understand an action as something for which someone is accountable, about which it is always appropriate to ask the agent for an intelligible account.[50]

So this description of a practice – and let us take the pianistic endeavour to be a sub-practice within the larger domain of musical culture – takes account of a social dimension (a dimension of space), a historical dimension (the tradition, the dimension of time), a narrative line and unity (with the individual as the carrier of that unity in and outside the practice and its tradition) and the psychological credibility of his actions (their intelligibility and his accountability). This is not to suppose that a practice is the carrier of objective values which are universally valid for all time. However, it does require us to accept – or failing that, to renegotiate from traditionally accepted principles – the current standards when we are initiated into the practice. Macintyre's example suggests – unusually for him[51] – a musical application: 'If, on starting

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[48] Ibid, p.190.
[49] Ibid, p.208.
[50] Ibid, p.209.
[51] Macintyre has not, to my knowledge, published in the field of aesthetics. Musical examples do however occur with some frequency in his discussions of the practice both here and elsewhere.

to listen to music I do not accept my own incapacity to judge correctly. I will never learn to hear, let alone appreciate, Bartok's last quartets.'[52]

The practice, in this conception, points in many directions; or. to put it another way, it draws together individual motives, rules. roles, – even texts – and synthesises them.

The Practice: (2) History and Telos

Ethical enquiry is, in Macintyre's view, only possible through a contemplation of its history and the products of that history.[53] Historical enquiry has formed the substance of his extensive work in the field of ethics over the last twenty years. By examining the products of such enquiry – texts, artefacts and so on – in terms of their provenance and genre we group them together in clusters and chains which form *traditions.* Traditions in turn generate *Weltanschauungen* and *philosophical systems*.[54] Thus he proposes a nested system of individual, practice, tradition and Weltanschauung. The related issues of commensurability and translatability arise between traditions and texts respectively. In order for the former to occur, we must locate a level of abstraction at which there is agreement about the content of concepts and then examine how the rival tradition builds from this position. In practice this entails rewriting the histories of rival traditions from a critical perspective. In a parallel move, he endorses translations provided that the translator has effectively learned the target language as a second 'first' language. In consequence, Macintyre views the history of philosophy as primary within the discipline – and not, for example, logic or ontology – and has therefore expended much effort on evaluating competing traditions, attempting to establish their commensurability by using their internal resources to critique those of their rivals. This has taken the form of extended historical narratives on, among other

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[52] Macintyre, *After Virtue,* p.190. Note the oddly inappropriate plural form.
[53] Alasdair Macintyre, *A Short History of Ethics* (London: Routledge, 1967), chapter 1, p.1-4.
[54] These distinctions are articulated in Alasdair Macintyre, 'The Relationship of Philosophy to its Past', in *Philosophy in History*, eds. R. Rorty, J. B. Schneewind and Q. Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p.31-48.

topics, Thomist ethics, the Scottish Enlightenment, and Nietzsche. Framing these debates is the larger project of trying to expose the shortcomings of post-Enlightenment 'liberal modernity' and the 'rationally inspired' ethical theories (Neo-Kantianism, Utilitarianism: see **Ethical Theories and Performance** above) most closely associated with it. He denies, in short, the possibility of an autonomous rational ethics, exhorting us to examine how key terms in ethical debates are historically constituted. Hence his interest in virtue theory and its history.[55] This is a parallel position to, and a vindication of, the recent critiques of the ideology of musical work autonomy (critiques which this study endorses).[56] I should mention that this is a quite brutal summary of a substantial body of work and does it scant justice. It has been much discussed and not always well received.[57]

One of the earliest authoritative formulations of virtue theory is to be found in Aristotle, who initiates his enquiry in the *Nicomachean Ethics* with these famous words: 'Every art and every investigation, and likewise every action and decision aim at some good; hence the good has been well described as that at which everything aims.'[58] This is, of course, a circular definition, one which begs the question of a transcendent good. Macintyre sees the search for the good as at least in part self-constitutive: the search itself – he calls it a 'quest'[59] – helps to define the end it seeks, which is initially indicated by the

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[55] Of relevance here are: 'The Relationship of Philosophy to its Past', which deals with the issue of commensurability and the 'sovereignty of history' within the discipline of philosophy; *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (London: Duckworth, 1988), which examines through detailed historical narrative competing concepts of justice by Hume and Aristotle; it includes detailed discussions of his views on translation, to which a whole chapter is devoted; *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopaedia, Genealogy, Tradition* (London: Duckworth, 1990); and of course *After Virtue* itself, which is itself a history of virtue theory from Homer to the present day, conjoined with a fierce critique of what Macintyre calls 'emotivism', by which he means an extreme form of liberalism driven by subjective desire.

[56] Lydia Goehr's work is a well-known example.

[57] Macintyre's work is discussed by a variety of authors in *After Macintyre: Critical Perspectives on the Work of Alasdair Macintyre*, eds. John Horton and Susan Mendus (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994). Joseph Margolis offers a detailed critique of the relation of theory to practice as expressed in the work of Macintyre and others in his *Life without Principles: Reconciling Theory and Practice* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996). A detailed refutation of the concept of the practice as employed in the social sciences generally is to be found in Stephen Turner, *The Social Theory of Practices: Tradition, Tacit Knowledge and Presuppositions* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1994). Turner's book is reviewed by James Bohman in *History and Theory: Studies in the Philosophy of History,* 36, (1997), 93-107.

[58] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. T.Irwin (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1985), p.1.

[59] Macintyre, *After Virtue*, p.219.

practice and the tradition it occupies. This is an intelligible position: Carroll's view is effectively that the art world is not goal-directed, but operates in a continual cycle of innovation and critical reflection, thus rendering it self-constitutive in Macintyre's sense. As far as the musical performer is concerned, innovation is kept in check by what might be called 'local' or 'micro-goods', which are well established: these have, as Kingsbury's investigation intimates, tended to harden to obligations of categorical obedience towards institutionally empowered individuals.

The Practice: (3) the Dialectic of Practice and Institution

Macintyre's motives in writing *After Virtue* were to explore and analyse what he saw as the moral decay of contemporary society. Hence the title '*After* Virtue'. One important conflict he tackles is the tension between institutions and the individuals that work within them. The criteria which make modern institutions successful – in particular their need for economic security – can obviously conflict with the values a practice wishes to uphold. Here is how Macintyre describes this relationship:

> Practices must not be confused with institutions. Chess, physics and medicine are practices: chess clubs, laboratories, universities and hospitals are institutions. Institutions are characteristically and necessarily concerned with what I have called external goods. They are involved with acquiring money and other material goods; they are structured in terms of power and social status and they distribute money, power and status as rewards. Nor could they do otherwise if they are to sustain not only themselves, but also the practices of which they are the bearers. For no practices can survive for any length of time unsustained by institutions. Indeed, so intimate is the relationship of practices to institutions – and consequently of the goods internal to the practices in question – that institutions and practices characteristically form a single causal order in which the ideals and the creativity of the practice are always vulnerable to the acquisitiveness of the institution, in which the cooperative care for the common goods of the practice is always vulnerable to the

> competitiveness of the institution. In this context the essential function of the virtues is clear. Without them, without justice, courage and truthfulness, practices could not resist the corrupting power of institutions.[60]

Here Macintyre's description chimes in happily with Kingsbury's empirical observations. It may appear that Macintyre is rather more conciliatory than Kingsbury, but Macintyre's is an idealised account. In fact his diagnosis of the *problems* surrounding institutional power more often resembles an autopsy. There is also an unmistakably Marxist flavour to this analysis, which is hardly unexpected given his longstanding engagement with this strand of thought. In fact it is to Weber's analysis of bureaucracy and bureaucratic power that Macintyre turns to describe what is most characteristic of modern social organisation, and he tries to show how an atomistic, autonomous conception of ethics interlocks with it. He isolates three distinctive types of individual, whom he designates 'characters', as symbolically significant. These are the Rich Aesthete, the Therapist and the Manager[61] and it is the latter figure, whose organising function acknowledges no aim beyond its own effectiveness within organisations and, atomistically, for himself, who is most important. Weber's analysis itself offers no help because in Macintyre's view it makes no sustained distinction between manipulative and non-manipulative social relations. The value that motivates a Manager in bureaucratic organisations is the mere maintenance of power and it is the managerial ethos that characteristically determines the goods external to contemporary practices. As the Manager has no motive for action other than to gain power or retain hold over it the goods internal to the practice increasingly come to serve external goods – such as promoting financial gain over all else – rather than the reverse condition, which Macintyre sees as *defining* the practice. Hence he asserts that practices, in his understanding of the term, cannot flourish in societies in which the virtues are not valued – and he clearly believes this is overwhelmingly the case today –

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[60] Macintyre, *After Virtue*, p.194.

[61] The Rich Aesthete is a character whose wealth allows him to disengage from any higher loyalties but who commands loyalty from those dependent upon him (Macintyre cites Henry James as an inspired analyst of this character-type). The Therapist is someone who sees her role as corrective: anyone who fails to conform socially requires by definition therapy, which

'although institutions and technical skills serving unified purposes might well continue to flourish'.[62]

Clearly there is much sense in this analysis and it deserves broad sympathy. Indeed, the doomsaying of, for example, Norman Lebrecht – and here the title of one of his recent books suffices: *When the Music stops... Managers, Maestros and the Corporate Murder of Classical Music*[63] – immediately gains in weight and authority read against the background of Macintyre. Adorno's aesthetics too, also drawing on Weber, make extensive use of the figure of a progressive encroachment of rationality in modern life, though here the application in music inclines towards the musical work itself, rather than human agency, as a 'zone of irrationality'. His suggestion is that the domain of the aesthetic *in toto* is less susceptible to rationalisation, as Max Paddison points out.[64] But there are problems with the concept of virtue itself. For example, the distinction – and conflict – between goods internal and external to the practice requires the individual, who may well function within the institution and practice simultaneously, to embody their contradictory values. Virtues, as we shall see, must normally be defined as mandatory qualities, if they are to retain their autonomy: if they are optional, they can degenerate into 'instruments of rationality' themselves. Any concept of the virtues will need to take account of this. The unity of narrative life which Macintyre stresses is a record of the swerves and compromises – the *failures* of virtue – that reconciling the internal and external goods of a practice entail.[65]

To summarise: Macintyre's model of the practice places it within a larger social context which contains other practices; it locates the individual

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henceforth becomes the technique of generating conformity. Macintyre, *After Virtue,* p.24 ff.

[62] Macintyre, *After Virtue,* p.193.

[63] Norman Lebrecht, *When the Music stops... Managers, Maestros and the Corporate Murder of Classical Music* (London: Simon and Schuster, 1996).

[64] Max Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p.135-148; see especially p.136-7 on 'instrumental' and 'value' rationality; and p.139 on music as a 'zone of irrationality'. See also Max Paddison, *Adorno, Modernism and Mass Culture* (London: Kahn and Averill, 1996) for further discussion (chapter one, 'Critical theory and Music', p.11-44). Richard Taruskin makes a direct connection between reification and what he calls the 'essential modernist fallacy': 'Turning ideas into objects, and putting objects in the place of people, is the essential modernist fallacy – the fallacy of reification, as it is called.' Richard Taruskin, *Text and Act Essays on Music and Performance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p.24.

both within the practice and within society at large: it stresses the importance of narrative unity for the individual and suggests how this unity can be threatened. The practice has two faces: an institution, whose function is enabling and supportive, but which is subject to general financial, legal and resource constraints; and the practice itself, which exists to further its tradition and the goods that tradition aspires to. The goods external to the practice reflect global constraints while the goods internal to it provide the individual with goals to work towards. To achieve these goods, the individual exercises the virtues. There is not always a clean division between these two domains.

The Practice: (4) Virtues, Skills, and Natural Capacities

> Musical performance would seem to require an unusual range of qualities which on account of their contrary nature are not often found together and are not easily developed in tandem. For example, in preparing a piece for performance, a pianist spends a great deal of time making sense of the details of the score, or in trying to solve complex problems of muscular coordination. In other words, preparing an interpretation requires systematic attention to detail. Within the time constraints a performance schedule imposes, it also requires considerable organisational ability, especially in estimating how much time learning new repertoire will take and integrating this into a daily practice regimen. Concentration, self-discipline, sensitivity to detail, the ability to solve intellectual problems and to balance priorities over the short and long term: these qualities sit uncomfortably together with those called upon in the performing situation itself, such as communicative flair, spontaneity, coping with the unforeseen, the ability to immerse oneself in the expressive moment, and a resilience of nerve which borders on insensitivity. The performer has at different times to plan resolutely for the future or to live from moment to moment.

How might we classify this diverse range of qualities? Let me consider Macintyre's views before turning to other commentators. In invoking 'virtue'

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[65] Macintyre, *After Virtue*, p.213.

and virtue theory. I want to access a resource which goes beyond mere skill or technique. (The negative everyday associations of the word – it can sound pompous and old-fashioned – should be disregarded in this discussion.) Macintyre's definition – 'partial and tentative' – relates the virtues in the first instance not so much to other qualities in the individual but to the practice itself:

> A virtue is an acquired human quality the possession and exercise of which tends to enable us to achieve those goods which are internal to practices and the lack of which effectively prevents us from achieving any such goods.[66]

But this is only half the story, for virtues are qualities which, Janus-like, link the practice to the individual, marking him out as belonging. They can be learned or acquired, like a skill or technique; but technique is definable as the most efficient means to achieve an end, while a virtue is implicated in the end itself: up to a point, virtue is indeed its own reward. Macintyre argues that the transformations that internal goods undergo over time are the result of human powers extended through the acquisition of skills *subordinated* to the exercise of virtue. He says:

> What is distinctive in a practice is in part the way in which conceptions of the relevant goods and ends which the technical skills serve – and every practice does require the exercise of technical skills – are transformed and enriched by these extensions of human powers and by that regard for its own internal goods which are partially definitive of each particular practice or type of practice.[67]

In consequence, 'practices never have a goal or goals fixed for all time' but are altered through a dialectical interaction with virtue.[68] It is therefore a virtue in itself to possess 'an adequate sense of the traditions to which one belongs or which confront one'.[69] All this tends to confirm Kingsbury's conclusion that

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[66] Macintyre, *After Virtue*, p.191.
[67] Ibid, p.193.
[68] Ibid, p.193.
[69] Ibid, p.223.

musical values are both the product and producer of musical practice.[70] This makes of music a mere vehicle for the exercise of power relations and I think we should reject a circularity conceived quite so narrowly. Macintyre's conception points to a more complex web of connections involving both other practices and the narrative thread of the individual life, the ways in which integrity across a whole life is sought (though not, of course, necessarily achieved).

The distinction here between virtue and skill is paralleled in musical parlance by that of *expression* and *technique* respectively. Kingsbury's top-down hierarchy is: talent, of which musicality is a kind; and technique and expression, which are aspects of musicality.[71] For performing musicians, technique signifies the range of physical skills – the 'toolbox' – a player possesses.[72] Musicality (or musicianship[73]) involves the ability to follow musical instructions (make sense of a score, interpret a conductor's gestures) *expressively*. In invoking 'expression' I do not wish to offer up a theory of one of the most discussed terms of aesthetics, except to say that in Kingsbury's sense – also the sense in which musical performers commonly use the word – it has an ambiguous transitivity. The player expresses both herself and the music (or some property of it). This is an ambiguity it shares with the terms 'authenticity' and 'performance'. In general terms, the self individuates itself by doing something familiar in a novel way: expression is allusive, intertextual, performative.[74]

There is more to musical performance than the marriage of technique and virtue as Linda Zagzebski's detailed ruminations on the nature of virtue and

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[70] I quoted Kingsbury above as saying that 'musical performance (including in this the social relations obtaining in the performance situation: relations of power), musical meaning, and musical structure are linked in a nexus in which each aspect is both product and producer of the others'. Kingsbury, *Music, Talent, and Performance,* p.110.

[71] Kingsbury, *Music, Talent, and Performance,* p.137.

[72] Technique is in turn dependent on instrument technology and developments in this field. I have not explored this avenue in this study, but have assumed that as a factor within pianistic practice it is *relatively* stable. An overview is provided by Reginald R. Gerig, *Famous Pianists and Their Technique* (Washington/New York: Robert B. Luce, 1974).

[73] Kingsbury does not discuss the differences between these two terms, apparently treating them as synonyms. In chapter five I will suggest a distinction between them.

[74] For a comment to this effect, see the concluding words of the entry on 'expression' by Stephen Mulhall, in *A Companion to Aesthetics*, ed. David Cooper (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), p.144-149.

its role in human behaviour implies.[75] She distinguishes between *natural capacities, skills* and *virtues* and their relationship to habits and feelings. I will now submit her claims to critical scrutiny:

1. Natural Capacities. These are uncontrollable or unchanging facts about a person. In so far as such facts exist, they are beyond the individual's responsibility and advantages that accrue from them are unearned. What she has in mind are above all physical characteristics, such as height. So if somebody can only stretch an octave at the piano, they cannot acquire the ability to stretch a tenth through diligent practice.[76] But such a concept is impossible to define accurately, because the body is in a constant state of change, change which is in turn critically dependent on environmental conditions. The most we can say is that certain changes are (currently) impossible and that others are more or less improbable. Instead, we might think in terms of certain potentials which a person more or less realises, depending on the environment she is in. This development contains time constraints, or 'windows of opportunity'. How tall you are depends on both genetic factors and how these (through diet and exercise, for example) interact with the environment: there is no making good on lost opportunities when body growth ceases. So it is with a performer's technique. As Zagzebski diffidently states '… the distinction between natural and acquired is somewhat vague since even natural qualities can often improve with training and practice'.[77] It is in part this distinction that is at stake in Kingsbury's identification of talent with a musician's sense of self-worth: how much of what a musician can do musically is the result of their own efforts, how much 'given'? There is no clear answer. What *is* clear is the need for a term that describes potential, which is a 'best case scenario' or an idealised future: this is another instance of the need for a degree of conceptual slackness to account for

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[75] Linda Trinkaus Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind: an Inquiry into the Nature of Virtue and the Ethical Foundations of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[76] Charles Rosen relates that Josef Hoffman could only manage an octave and Steinway actually went to the trouble of constructing him a piano with slightly narrower keys to make certain works easier to play. (Charles Rosen, 'On Playing the Piano', p.49.) A point Rosen also makes is that the size of a pianist's hand is of minor significance and that technique is highly individual. In fact we might say, following his argument to a logical conclusion, that one skill a (proficient) pianist needs is to be able to find personalised technical solutions to pianistic problems and develop his own personal technique through experiment.

[77] Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind*, p.103.

the unpredictability of human behaviour. Kingsbury is right in problematising the concept of 'talent', which is used in precisely this way: it is neither part of the individual nor entirely separate. But it is a term with an important role to play within the conceptual scheme. I would propose a different avenue of exploration: *when* do we decide that an individual has talent? And how is it monitored? This is a question about individual development and how children gain membership of a practice.[78]

2. Skills. Her view confirms what we already know: that they are the specific means to achieving particular ends and that they are to be judged for their external effectiveness; they are learnable and forgettable; some are prerequisite to successful social functioning (such as the ability to read) while others, such as some musicianship skills are highly differentiated and hence not 'transferable'; skills have no opposites, unlike virtues (whose opposites are of course 'vices'); while it is conceivable that someone could on occasion be virtuous by accident, accidental skill is virtually impossible. Monkeys do not type sentences, let alone Shakespearean tragedies. Some skills are not worth possessing, but all virtues are.[79] 'Virtue in excess' is nonetheless conceivable.[80] Skills are also inseparable from virtues because carrying out virtuous actions requires skill. Zagzebski gives some interesting examples of this connectedness which suggest that the underlying distinction between the two parallels Ryle's famous epistemic categorisation: 'knowing that' entails virtue, whereas 'knowing how' entails skill.[81] If virtues provide a stable framework for behaviour, skills are the executive function. Zagzebski's larger project, 'an inquiry into the ethical foundations of knowledge' is indeed an attempt to centre epistemology on the virtues.

3. Virtues. Zagzebski's definition of a virtue is as follows:

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[78] I return to this theme in chapter four below. There I propose a three stage model to describe the initiation process.

[79] It is a moot point, incidentally, whether all practices are worthwhile. This is discussed by Elizabeth Frazer and Nicola Lacey in 'Macintyre, Feminism, and the Concept of Practice' in Horton and Mendus, *After Macintyre*, p.265-282, esp. p.273-5.

[80] Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind*, p.196.

[81] Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind*, p.113 and 117. Gilbert Ryle, *Concept of Mind* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990, first edition 1949).

> ... a deep and enduring acquired excellence of a person, involving a characteristic motivation to produce a certain desired end and reliable success in bringing about that end.[82]

What marks out a virtue is that it is acquired over a long period of time and is consistently employed in different situations and practices. It is habitual, but not thoughtlessly so. This sense of scale is important because it links virtues to the life narrative and its intelligibility. This is one of the key arguments in refuting the criticism that the definition is circular and hence merely a paraphrase of means-ends rationality. Echoing Macintyre, she says:

> It is part of the ability to have a concept of the self that changes in character can be understood by the agent herself. She must be able to tell herself a story in which she has no trouble identifying with the person she remembers being at each stage of the change.[83]

Virtues can be 'self-regarding' or 'other-regarding' and there can be antagonism between the two aspects;[84] their consequences can be gauged internally and externally;[85] they can appear in a moral and an intellectual guise, where the intellectual virtues operate as a control or 'filter' for the memory, and the moral virtues as a control on actions.[86] There is also a special higher-order, organising virtue, that of phronesis, or practical wisdom.[87] Feelings play an important role in what Zagzebski refers to as the 'motivational component' of virtue: 'a "motive"', she says, 'in the sense relevant to an inquiry into virtue is an emotion or feeling that initiates and directs action towards an end'.[88] This is consistent with recent research on the role of feelings and emotions in the brain and nervous system. For example, it has been shown in research on brain-damaged patients that an absence of feeling effectively freezes up the decision-making

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[82] Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind,* p.137.
[83] Ibid, p.123.
[84] Ibid, p.99.
[85] Ibid, p.98-99.
[86] Ibid, p.89.
[87] On phronesis, see Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind*, p.211-231.
[88] Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind*, p.131.

process.[89] In the light of this, a theory of musical performance will require a virtue of 'commitment'.

Zagzebski concludes that 'virtues and skills have numerous connections, but virtues are psychically prior to skills'.[90] However, I think she goes too far in claiming that they are distinct from each other: rather, the 'value system' and the 'executive' are mutually implicated.

Zagzebski's discussion of virtue aims for 'a high degree of theoretical significance combined with practical usefulness'.[91] Although she adopts an analytical stance she is not rigid in applying it. Nor does she claim to have exhausted the topic.[92] Paths are left untrodden and projects postponed. So we should not expect peremptory conclusions. Even so, some of the claims she makes seem to me rash – given that the distinction between virtue, skill and natural capacity is not always as clear as she would wish – others, such as the discussion of moral and intellectual virtue, vague.[93]

A Note on Concepts

It may be worthy to regard persons as 'ontologically more fundamental than acts' and to wish to define acts in terms of persons, as virtue theory does; it is certainly theoretically implied in the ethics of 'individualism' which underlies the performing musician's training.[94] If we allow this ontological move – and in making the performer the locus of attention, we do just this – we must agree with Zagzebski that what makes a theory a *virtue* theory is that 'it focuses analysis more on the concepts involved in the evaluation of persons than on act evaluation'.[95] What do we know of the concept of a concept? And how useful is the kind of 'classical' analytical concept, with its search for necessary and

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[89] In this regard, see the work of Antonio R. Damasio, *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason and the Human Brain* (New York: Grosset/Putnam, 1994), which argues this point in detail. Also of interest is Joseph Ledoux, *The Emotional Brain: the Mysterious Underpinnings of Emotional Life* (London: Phoenix, 1999).

[90] Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind*, p.115.

[91] Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind*, p.89.

[92] See, for example, her comments on integrity. Ibid, p.166.

[93] Ibid, p.139.

[94] Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind*, p.79.

sufficient conditions, that Zagzebski and other analytical philosophers work with?

Owen Flanagan has argued that any moral theory should achieve at least a minimal compatibility with the understanding of human nature available from cognitive science. He calls this the 'principle of minimal psychological realism`:

> Make sure when constructing a moral theory or projecting a moral ideal that the character, decision processing, and behaviour described are possible, or are perceived to be possible, for creatures like us.[96]

It turns out that there is no single accepted description of the concept as a mental entity. The 'classical' theory, as defined above ('necessary and sufficient conditions'), fares badly.[97] Rather, it is typical of concepts to lack hard-edged boundaries, to be 'fuzzy'; to demonstrate prototypical effects; and to contain metaphorical elements.[98] We might therefore expect the concept of performance to exhibit these qualities.

Is Zagzebski's analysis psychologically realistic? Although it fails to provide watertight categories, its very fuzziness is an advantage. Musical performance practice values innovation: but any analysis which looks closely at *performance* must have a means of accounting for difference, the uniqueness of the occasion. A theory which posits fixed character traits in a person will always struggle at the level of finest detail, because no two actions are completely alike. As I have already argued in relation to the concept of the practice, a *degree* of conceptual fuzziness in describing human behaviour is essential in allowing us to assess innovation and reassess past achievements.

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[95] Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind*, p.79.

[96] Flanagan is quoted by Mark L. Johnson in his essay 'Ethics', in Bechtel and Graham, *A Companion to Cognitive Science*, p.693.

[97] One recent definition: 'Most concepts (especially lexical concepts) are structured representations that encode a set of necessary and sufficient conditions for their application, if possible, in sensory or perceptual terms.' From *Concepts: Core Readings*, eds. Eric Margolis and Stephen Laurence, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1999), p.10.

[98] Margolis and Laurence, *Concepts: Core Readings* chapter 1; and Mark L. Johnson, 'Ethics'.

The conclusion to draw from the above is that we should expect anomalies, impurity and untidiness in the conceptual world. This is nicely illustrated by the problem of accounting for the virtues – if such they be – of originality, imagination and creativity. Zagzebski is willing to include them as such[99] while at the same time denying them some of the defining qualities that supposedly constitute virtues generally, such as rule-obedience, or habituation.

In musical performance terms I would offer this model. If a performer, at work on preparing an interpretation, imagines how a part of the music will sound, this is a performative act. It is performative in so far as it involves both imagining something that already exists (the notated work), for an 'audience' of the critical self; and in so doing it necessarily alters it (exact repetition being impossible). Originality is implicated in any performative act: it is a matter of degree. On a larger time scale, originality depends on historical context, and can only be a *relative* value. Creativity is the name we give to the synthesis of what is perceived as substantially and intentionally different from prior conceptions. This model requires that the performer has planned her interpretation. (And of course it is possible to play music quasi-spontaneously, without forming an interpretation first: this is what happens in sight-reading.[100])

These are, if you like, necessary, but not sufficient conditions for creativity. A musical performance must also be received with critical approval: what is approved is a matter for the exponents and critics of a practice to discuss. As I noted in Chapter One, it is only to be expected in a practice with such a large element of innovation as musical performance that theory will lag behind practice. This is the logical outcome.

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[99] Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind*, p123, p.155.

[100] I return to this in chapter four. See in particular Jerrold Levinson's discussion of the limits of performative interpretation in 'Performative vs. Critical Interpretation of Music', in Krausz, *The*

Summary: Constituents of Macintyre's Model of a Practice

Macintyre's model contains the following elements:

1. Social – cooperative human activity.

2. Social/historical – the setting.

3. Historical – tradition.

4. Psychological/ethical – unity and intergrity of individual behaviour within the practice and within an individual life; and

5. Intelligibility of behaviour and potential accountability.

6. Ethical – standards of excellence, obedience to rules and achievement of goods through

7. The exercise of the virtues.

In addition, he makes a distinction between practices and institutions, which exist to support them.

Interpretation of Music.

Part Two: Pianistic Practice

Situating Pianistic Practice

Macintyre's model is a layered, nested structure. The outer rings – Tradition, which generates 'Weltanschauungen' and philosophical systems – encompass the largest scoops of time and space and deal in the most abstract generalities: they contain practices, which in turn contain individuals within them with the performances themselves at each unique nexus of time and space as the primal instances of particularity.[101] The world of music can be viewed in this way. At the most general level we raise the issue of the concept of 'music' itself: what common features do the musics of different cultures exhibit? Are they reducible to an identifiable, definable essence? Here the question of commensurability arises, and this is a matter for ethnomusicologists and music psychologists to investigate. It will be the theme of part of my final chapter. The present perspective is narrower: classical music performance, and pianism in particular, to be understood at the level of a well-established practice, some two hundred years old.

I would like to complicate further Macintyre's (spatial) metaphor in two ways. Both concern the problem of framing a practice. Firstly, we should remind ourselves of the possibility of multiple membership: we identify ourselves, and are identified, as belonging to many different practices simultaneously. Virtues cross practices and in this way exert a pervasive influence. Secondly – and partly in consequence of this – the boundaries of practices are not absolute: membership may be a matter of degree, with institutional and attitudinal factors playing a part. In fact, the problems of describing practice membership are rather similar to those of describing concept membership: the boundaries are not infinitely permeable, nor are they rigidly defined.

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[101] Macintyre, 'The Relationship of Philosophy to its Past'.

Taking pianism as my central practice, I will in the course of this study encounter some of the other major practices with which it overlaps, such as composition, analysis, recording and piano teaching.

The Double History of Pianism

In chapter one (**History or Histories?)** I argued, following Lydia Goehr, that the practice of art music performance is effectively a double history, in which two attitudes to performance are in constant counterpoint.[102] This double practice emerged in the nineteenth century with Liszt as a key figure in its mythology, one who embodied this ambivalence. I take this to be a picture which many pianists (and performers generally) of this century would recognise and broadly endorse, though of course individual perspectives will vary.

The first strand of this larger theme I would like to take up is the emergence of specialisation. Historically we can note that from the very beginnings of pianistic practice, there has been considerable overlap between composition and performance. Mozart, Beethoven, and then Clementi, Hummel and many other early nineteenth-century figures did both. In fact, in the first few decades of the nineteenth century, composers who were not also performers (such as Schubert) were exceptions to the rule. By the middle of the century, there is an increasing tendency for musicians to become identified with one dominant pursuit, even though they may have simultaneously been active as performers, transcribers, composers, critics and even historical musicologists. (Think of the alternative careers of Brahms as editor, Clara Schumann and Joachim as composers, Wagner as critic and conductor as examples.)

If in the nineteenth century composers were often performers (or vice versa), in the twentieth century the drive towards specialisation into discrete practices has certainly been more urgent. As in the field of composition, it is the

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[102] Lydia Goehr, 'The Perfect Performance of Music and the Perfect Musical Performance', *new formations: a Journal of Culture/Theory/Politics,* 27, (Winter 1995-6), volume title 'Performance Matters', p.1-22.

years preceding the First World War that seem to mark a watershed.[103] Busoni is a figure who captures the contradictions of this critical phase, around the turn of the century; within him the roles of performer, transcriber, composer, aesthetician and critic are finely balanced. He occupies a fascinating point of intersection. His almost exact contemporary Rachmaninoff approaches him in breadth as do Paderewski and Cortot (though in each case with different emphases). The following generations produced a number of great composers who were also notable performers – Bartok, Prokofiev and later Benjamin Britten, for example – but the trend towards specialisation was by mid century advanced.[104]

In the early years of the century these new specialisations were also increasingly regulated and hence standardised. These were years of demographic change with the emergence of 'mass culture', the decline in the role of informal contacts (the piano 'schools' of Leschetizky and others) relative to that of organised pedagogy administered by institutions (the conservatory); and, in the long term, the revolutionising complementary inventions of broadcasting and the mechanical (later electronic-digital) reproduction of music. Standardisation segues into internationalisation, especially in the years after the Second World War, and the division of labour in the art music field into composer and performer is replicated in other industrialised countries. The audience classical music performers serve begins to be thought of in global, rather than national, or European, terms. Recordings help to establish international reputations – here the advent of the LP and tape-recording and editing techniques are significant – and improvements in long distance transportation (such as the introduction of commercial air flight) makes

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[103] Dahlhaus places the end of the Romantic era in the first decade of the twentieth century. Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, trans. J. B. Robinson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), ch.7. (p.390-394). Marc Pincherle, *The World of the Virtuoso* trans. Brockway (London: Gollancz, 1964) makes much of an isolated incident at a concert in Paris early in the century to support this claim. (p.29-30.) Robert Philip makes 1911 'a convenient landmark in the history of marketing of piano recordings' in *The Cambridge Companion to the Piano*, ed. David Rowland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.82.

[104] There are of course many contemporary examples of performer-composers. It is however rather unusual to come across a professional performer of eighteenth and nineteenth-century repertory who is active as a composer of contemporary music.

extended touring easier. There is thus an increase in de facto autonomy for both packaged sounds and performances.

The end of the Second World War marks a threshold of another kind, as a new practice of performing emerges. There are compelling reasons for drawing the line here and I will argue later (in chapter four) that these have to do with innovations in post war avant-garde compositional practice which effectively lead to the transformation of the concept of 'interpretation' (or, in a sense, to its demise). At the same time the established 'double' practice lived on in the second half of the century, its repertory largely frozen, with Bach and Webern marking the outer limits, leavened with occasional token gestures towards 'new' music.[105]

Pianistic history is, then, a double history, with a pronounced move towards specialisation and a critical hiatus around 1945. Attempts to categorise styles of interpretation and performance further according to genealogy – the pupils of Liszt constituting a 'Liszt school' in contrast with the 'Leschetitzky school' – or according to geographical distribution – 'national' schools of pianism – have not been convincing. In fact a simple 'generational' model seems to capture similarities in performance styles best: contemporaries tend to play in a broadly similar way.[106]

For these reasons, it is perhaps easiest to conceive the history of pianism in terms of a succession of key figures: initially the practice starts out with individuals tending to embody the contradictory elements of the 'double' practice (for example Liszt or Busoni); later, the practice tends to generate

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[105] This is a crudely oversimplified picture which contains a central truth. Charles Rosen offers an explanation from a different perspective. He comments: 'Every pianist plays some of the music that was being written when he was twenty or thirty. But after that, it gets harder and harder to learn new music and to appreciate it, so you stick with the composers you start with.' Rosen is quoted by David Dubal in his interview collection *The World of the Concert Pianist: Conversations with 35 Internationally Celebrated Pianists* (London: Gollancz, 1985), p.278. For further comments on this topic, see Charles Rosen, *The Frontiers of Meaning: Three Informal Lectures on Music* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1994), p.3.

[106] James Methuen Cambell, *Chopin Playing: From the Composer to the Present Day* (London: Gollancz, 1981) and (by the same author) 'Chopin in Performance', in *The Cambridge Companion to Chopin*, ed. Jim Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p.191-205) both organise their discussions around the notion of 'national' schools. In *The Four Ballades* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), Jim Samson follows the 'generational' model. Perhaps there is a limited case for a combined genealogical geographical argument.

pianistic types, who align themselves with either strand. Consider the example of Artur Schnabel, who occupies the high point of modernism within this history. He remembers (with pride, one feels) his teacher, Leschetizky. describing him as a 'musician', rather than a 'pianist' (whereas his rival, Mark Hambourg was, in Schnabel's opinion, the reverse) and comments that.

> … being a pupil of Leschetitzky and Mandiczewski. I became associated with two different musical departments. Through Leschetizky I was connected with the virtuoso tradition and introduced to Anton Rubenstein. Through Mandiczewski I made contact with the Brahms circle.[107]

His concern is thus in part to distance himself from the particularities of the instrument itself; this is entirely of a piece with his attitude towards the performance occasion as a whole, in which the greatest music is 'absolute music' and the performer and the listener are disembodied and thus effectively disappear.[108] The connections line up neatly: the instrument, skill/'knowing-how'/virtuosity, the concrete performance occasion; as opposed to knowledge and understanding ('knowing that' as virtue), disembodiment and transcendence.[109]

At the same time, Schnabel acknowledges the role of compositional style: his idealist stance towards the performance occasion is reflected in his taste in music. He famously commented that he was 'only attracted to music that is better than it can be performed' (the category consists of the German classics but excludes for example Chopin's studies) and adds that 'unless a piece of music presents a problem to me, a never-ending problem, it doesn't interest me too much'.[110] This indirect association of performance with problem-solving dovetails nicely with the notion of transparent translation, too, because

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[107] Artur Schnabel, *My Life and Music*, p.24-6. Glenn Gould argues a similar case. See Kevin Bazzana, *Glenn Gould: the Performer in the Work* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), p.122.

[108] Schnabel, *My Life and Music*, p.239.

[109] Lydia Goehr, in *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: an Essay in the Philosophy of Music* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), speaks of the '*transcendent* move from the worldly and particular to the spiritual and universal; [and] the *formalist* move which brought meaning from music's outside into its inside.' (p.121) It is interesting to note how the original etymological connection between 'virtue' and 'virtuosity' has been obscured to the point where I find myself aligning virtuosity with a *lack* of virtue.

it suggests that text *contains* problems rather than requires completion.[111] One of Schnabel's best-known pupils, Leon Fleischer, lumps together Schnabel with Toscanini as the most influential figures in twentieth-century performance because

> [T]hey counteracted that horrible nineteenth-century trend in which the performer became more important than the music… [They] brought back fidelity to the text. Not just a dry fidelity, but an alive, impassioned recreation, in which the reality of the text becomes your base of operation.[112]

In this interpretation, Schnabel's shift of emphasis was, *pace* Goehr, a critical response to a deplorable state of affairs. Incidentally, note how Fleischer's comments allow for a distinction between fidelity to the score (Texttreue) subordinated to the notion of fidelity to the work (Werktreue).

Other pianists follow a similar line of argument. For example, Claudio Arrau traces the conflict within the practice back to Liszt, finding (like Dahlhaus) a distinction in his compositional praxis. He comments that

> … in the *Mephisto* Waltz, every note has so much expressive value, one wouldn't do anything for bravura's sake… the *Norma* Fantasy, or the *I puritani* Paraphrase… were made to show off the capacity of the pianist. At one time this was justified in a sense because concerts were supposed to be a display of skill. Then it was justified. But not now.[113]

Elsewhere Brendel offers a different slant on this distinction, making not Liszt but Chopin of decisive importance:

> Looking back at the tradition of performing since Liszt, I see two basic types of performers: those who mastered a large central European repertory, and those who became Chopin specialists, with a few composers around him;… to

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[110] Schnabel, *My Life and Music*, p.122.

[111] Lawrence Venuti discusses this issue in relation to language translation in *The Translator's Invisibility: a History of Translation* (London: Routledge, 1995), ch.1. On 'problem-solving', see Sarah Martin's review of Dunsby: *Performing Music* and John Rink, ed.: *The Practice of Performance: Studies in Musical Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) in *Music Analysis*, 17 (1998), 108-121.

[112] Dubal, *The World of the Concert Pianist*, p.171.

[113] Joseph Horowitz, *Conversations with Arrau* (London: Collins, 1982), p.124.

> do Chopin justice, one would have to specialise, at least I know *I* would have to specialise.[114]

Brendel does not spell out what it is that makes Chopin's music exceptional, though he might have in mind, on the one hand, a certain indebtedness, highly mediated though it is, to the 'display' culture of early nineteenth-century pianism; or perhaps those elements of pianistic style which Carl Schachter summarised as 'Chopin's unparalleled mastery of free, idiomatically pianistic counterpoint'.[115] Brendel's avowed personal taste is, significantly, for music which foregrounds motivic processes, and his musical analyses demonstrate this preoccupation.[116]

Some pianists express an allegiance openly: Schiff echoes Schnabel, for example.[117] Others talk about their activity in a way which betrays a sympathy, such as Ivo Pogorelich.[118] Pogorelich is a 'virtuoso' who clearly has the performer's image and impact firmly in the foreground of his consciousness. Commenting on the reputedly 'demonic' qualities of virtuosi such as Paganini and Liszt in performance he has this to say:

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[114] David Dubal, *The World of the Concert Pianist,* p.95.

[115] As quoted in Jim Samson, *Chopin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p.112, from Schacter's review of Samson: *The Music of Chopin*, in *Music Analysis,* 8 (1989), 187-196.

[116] Alfred Brendel, *Music Sounded Out*: *Essays, Lectures, Interviews, Afterthoughts* (London: Robson, 1990) contains representative examples of his 'motivic' analyses. Nicholas Cook discusses Chopin in this regard. His words are worth quoting at length: '... from Beethoven's time onwards, a variety of fast music developed which makes less sense when played slowly: in Chopin's Scherzos, for instance, or for that matter in most of his faster piano pieces, there are sequences of chords which have no structural significance whatever, and which are meant to be perceived as splashes of colour within slower-moving progressions of structural harmonies. When they are played too slowly, these colouristic chord sequences are no longer perceived as such: instead they are heard as if they were genuine harmonic progressions, and the result is that the music becomes both texturally clogged and harmonically incoherent. Playing the music too slowly, in other words, turns it into nonsense; and the same applies to a great deal of more recent music, above all, perhaps, to Messiaen's piano works. Whether or not this is of significance to the composer, it is certainly of significance to the performer...' Nicholas Cook, *Music, Imagination, and Culture* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), p.200-201.

The tendency to categorise repertory in this way lives on. It has been applied to contemporary music by Mervyn Cooke. He proposes a dialectic between 'structure' and 'sonority': '[M]any composers moved away from overtly colouristic effects to cultivate a more abstract keyboard idiom as a vehicle for complex musical structures. Others continued to experiment with the piano's sonorous potential by introducing further innovative methods of sound production...' He adds that the distinction is not absolute. From Rowland, *The Cambridge Companion to the Piano,* p.202.

[117] Dubal, *The World of the Concert Pianist,* p.294.

[118] Dubal, *The World of the Concert Pianist*, p.264. Pogorelich talks of '*making* a successful performance' (my italics) with two pieces by Prokofiev (significantly transcriptions).

> If the artist on stage has this quality he must let it escape. But this can be very draining, even dangerous, because the performer must release all of his personality and being the way Horowitz could. He was white hot – his passion and volcanic power, his ability to excite, the fire of his temperament dominated the piano-playing world.[119]

It is important for a great virtuoso not to play badly, he adds, as this might damage his reputation and 'kill his legend'. Pogorelich's point is not a trivial observation. A (virtuoso) performer whose interest is in 'the perfect musical performance' stakes his claim to fame on creating a lasting reputation. If successful, a 'legend' or a 'myth' arises. The perfect musical performance is unreconstructable and so it relies instead on exemplifying anecdotes. A story told of an early Horowitz performance is typical: when he began playing the (accompanying) chords at the beginning of Tchaikovsky's first concerto, the conductor apparently could not believe his ears and stepped off the podium to stare in astonishment at the pianist playing. To show a highly respected member of the profession in awe of a fellow performer is one of the best ways to fuel a legend.[120] But such a form of evanescent fame is fragile, based as it is on subjective memory. Such a player will tend to be preoccupied with the incalculable and the irrational: the acoustics of the venue, the tone and action of the instrument, nuance, atmosphere and the excitement of the moment. If the perfect musical performance succeeds, then the performer will take credit for it. Interestingly, if the perfect performance of music succeeds, the description of the process is characteristically rather different: the music takes over and communicates itself.[121]

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[119] Dubal, *The World of the Concert Pianist*, p.269.

[120] Harold C. Schonberg, *Horowitz: His Life and Music* (London: Simon and Schuster, 1992), p.79-80. Schonberg presents the story in Horowitz's own words (the conductor was Eugene Pabst).

[121] Jonathan Dunsby's comments at the beginning of the final chapter of his *Performing Music: Shared Concerns* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995) tend to confirm this observation. 'Perhaps there is an irony in the fact that whereas the intellectual with a carefully nurtured philosophical disposition may well find Boulez's notion of past masters "speaking of us through us" altogether too gooey for our own good, this is just what the performer does experience when things are going well; and this is something of what passes to the audience – "it's just as if Mozart himself had been playing tonight", we sometimes say.' (p.80)

No performer is wholly dedicated to *either* the work *or* the performance of it: these are extreme positions with no more than theoretical significance. They mark the limits of a space within which performers can move with some fluidity. Changes in allegiance can be momentary; or they can occur over decades.[122] The double history is in this respect doubtless no more than a persuasive simplification.

Individual Careers and Narrative Unity

What bearing does all this have on the notion of the unity of an individual life? In Macintyre's formulation, being able to construct a plausible narrative is a major factor. This would seem to make good psychological sense. It is widely acknowledged that narrative plays a central part in our creating a sense of identity for ourselves.[123] A common story musicians – be they composers or performers – tell of themselves is vocational. In Schnabel's striking formulation, for example, 'a true musician was not only a man in love with music but one who was "*loved by music* – whose mind and being was possessed by music"'.[124] The vocation is precisely the kind of structuring telos Macintyre has in mind.

Here the issue of specialisation deserves further consideration, for it has both a historical and an *individual* dimension. Many composers spent time early in their musical careers performing before switching their allegiance. Chopin, for example, was unusually distinguished in both fields: he initially made a living as a pianist who composed, becoming in later years a composer who occasionally performed. This turns out to be a characteristic shift within individual lives. Performance skills are 'embodied': the process of embodiment has to begin early and requires continuous cultivation. Youth and early maturity

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[122] Arrau, the one-time child prodigy and virtuoso is a case in point.

[123] For example, the cognitive psychologist Jerome Bruner has suggested that already as children we possess a 'protolinguistic' readiness for narrative organisation and discourse. Jerome Bruner, *Acts of Meaning* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990), p.80.

[124] Cesar Saerchinger, *Artur Schnabel: a Biography* (London: Cassell, 1957), p.309. This striking formulation anticipates the fashionable idea of music as a 'meme'. See Susan Blackmore, *The Meme Machine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

cope with the physical demands of (virtuoso) performance better. and the urge to prove oneself against competition – and competitions are the best measure of skill – will be undimmed.[125] Pogorelich speculates that for a performer of the status of Liszt or Horowitz, whose publics attributed almost super-human powers to them, succumbing to age must be a terrible frustration.[126] It is above all Liszt's career, with its abrupt renunciation of virtuoso public performance, which exemplifies in radical form a frequently encountered tendency throughout the history of piano performance. The numerous examples of pianists who have either given up performing in public completely, or interrupted their careers for long periods, supply haunting variations on this theme. Liszt both sets and follows (e.g. Beethoven before him) a precedent; Horowitz himself took extended sabbaticals from performing, in order to recover and recharge himself (and financial inducements certainly seem to have played their part in tempting him back);[127] a frustration with the 'non-take-two-ness' of performance and a fear of a perceived (or paranoia-induced) 'blood-lust' in audiences who want to witness scandalous failure, appparently lay behind Gould's departure from the concert scene;[128] Pollini's early success in the Chopin Competition at the age of eighteen in 1959 was followed by a period of complete withdrawal from concert life for near on a decade, in order to study the instrument; more recently, we have seen a tendency for pianists (Barenboim, Ashkenazy, Vasary) to move into the field of conducting (as Cortot did at the beginning of the century); still

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[125] Dunsby talks about the many different types of loss (including technique) in *Performing Music*, p.35.

[126] Dubal, *The World of the Concert Pianist,* p.269. Compare the case of Paderewski, whose pianistic powers in later life were said to have declined steeply. His recordings have been interpreted as reflecting this. See Robert Philip's comments in Rowland, *The Cambridge Companion to the Piano*, p.76.

[127] Schonberg, *Horowitz.*

[128] Geoffrey Payzant, *Glenn Gould: Music and Mind* (Toronto: Key Porter, 1984), ch. 2. Gould's motives have been subject to close scrutiny. Andrew Stephen, for example, plausibly (but prosaically) suggests that Gould set himself such high standards at an early age – having been pushed to the limit by an over-ambitious mother – that he was increasingly unable to meet them. His well-known dependency on drugs (especially barbiturates) exacerbated the problems, making him prone to memory lapses. Andrew Stephen, 'Genius who died with his gloves on', review of Peter Oswald: *Glenn Gould: the Ecstacy and Tragedy of Genius* (New York: Norton, 1997) in *The Observer*, Review section, Sept. 14, 1997. Peter Oswald himself avoids such cynically 'materialist' explanations; his view is that Gould suffered from Asperger's Syndrome, a condition related to autism, and that this best accounts for much of Gould's strange (anti-) social behaviour.

others, like Schnabel himself, have chosen to teach: these are prominent examples scattered through the history of the practice.

In closing, I will allow myself a speculation which touches on a recurring theme in this study: the relationship of product to process. It may be that those performers who dedicate themselves to 'the perfect performance of music' – who endorse a 'craft' relation of performance to composition[129] – are better equipped to creating unity (or at least continuity) in their lives. Those who pursue the 'perfect musical performance' are more prone to disappointment as their quest is for something which by its very nature evanesces. The musical work is a concrete exemplification of a transcendent value: it is a reification, an objectification which celebrates stability. Stability, it has been persuasively argued, is an ultimate goal of human cultures. In the words of Hannah Arendt,

> … the reality and reliability of the human world rest primarily on the fact that we are surrounded by things more permanent than the activity by which they were produced, and potentially even more permanent than the lives of their authors.[130]

The musical performance is quite the opposite: it aims to achieve an improbable transcendence from *process*. Performers who pitch their lot with the ephemeral alone constantly face this debilitating paradox.

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[129] This is Adorno's description. See Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music*, p.187.
[130] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), p.94, quoted in Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), p.7.

Part Three: The Virtues of Pianism

Virtues of Pianistic Performance

Performing music is more than a matter of simply following instructions. At least, that is my assumption. The difficulty facing the theorist of performer behaviour is in going beyond a description of performance as the realisation of a set of commands contained in a score.[131] It is a fact that scores underdetermine performances, just as it is a fact that no performance, however well planned, can be entirely predictable: nothing ever happens exactly the same way twice. If a performance *were* entirely predetermined, the performer's role would be reduced to that of an 'operator' (rather in the sense that we operate CD players). There is a balance between pre-determined elements – the composition, the player's preconceived interpretation – and open, occasion-dependent elements in which a constant feedback between the performer and his environment contributes to the final outcome. My proposal has been to enlist virtue theory as a way of filling this gap. It is through the possession and exercise of specific virtues that a performer negotiates the space that the score's multi-valency and the accidents of the occasion create. Simultaneously, I hope that virtue theory at least hints at a solution to the problem of circularity, by showing how a performer's behaviour in performance can – in theory at least – be linked to her behaviour elsewhere.

Let me continue with a reminder of the two definitions I quoted above. First Macintyre's 'partial and tentative' definition:

> … an acquired human quality the possession and exercise of which tends to enable us to achieve those goods which are internal to practices and the lack of which effectively prevents us from achieving any such goods.[132]

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[131] Taruskin draws attention to a parallel between the two tiers of legal practice – legislative and interpretative – and the roles of composer and performer in the performing arts. Taruskin, *Text and Act*, p.35-37.

[132] Macintyre, *After Virtue*, p.191.

To this we should add that the achievement of goods invokes standards of excellence and requires obedience to rules.[133] Now Zagzebski:

> … a deep and enduring acquired excellence of a person, involving a characteristic motivation to produce a certain desired end and reliable success in bringing about that end.[134]

The two definitions apply at different levels of generality: Macintyre's points to the latitudinal frame of the practice, Zagzebski's to the longditudinal frame of the individual. At this point an ideal continuation of the argument would be to propose a list of virtues entailed in pianistic practice. It is clear that such personal qualities as determination, patience and intellectual integrity are essential to the undertaking; however, generalisations of this kind are simply too abstract.[135] Virtues begin to resemble contracts more and more at the level of specific instances. What follows is an attempt to bridge the gap between abstract virtues of this kind and simplistic prescription. I propose we think of pianistic performance as guided by the following principles. (It will be clear, I hope, that they require only minor adjustments to make them applicable to art music performance generally):

1. To perform a work in such a way that a considered personal interpretation is audibly manifest.
2. To derive a personal interpretation as far as possible from the evidence the work, and its tradition of performance, provides.
3. To perform with personal commitment and a heightened sense of awareness of what is taking place; to respect the uniqueness of the occasion and each moment within it.
4. To exercise whatever control one can over the content and context of the performance occasion such that the other virtues are readily perceivable.

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[133] Macintyre, *After Virtue*, p.190.

[134] Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind*, p.137.

[135] Fanny Waterman has provided a resonant list. A great performer must possess 'inclination and imagination, backed up by application, concentration and determination'. Wendy Thompson with Fanny Waterman, *Piano Competition: The Story of Leeds* (London: Faber and Faber, 1990), p.xiv.

There are, no doubt, significant gaps here between virtue, principle and rule which remain to be filled adequately. Nonetheless, this formulation does go some way towards building bridges. The historical framework is clear: these have been the guiding principles of the practice from its gradual emergence in the middle of the nineteenth century until the present day. As far as the dialectical tension between the two strands of the practice is concerned, both draw on these principles, but on different aspects, in different ways. In particular, the first two, which stress the pre-existing 'text' of a performance (interpretation) are in potential conflict with the third and fourth, which are orientated to the concrete moment.

What justification is there for linking these prescriptive statements to 'virtues' at all? What do they exemplify which might relate them to something greater than pianistic practice? What is the ethical framework within which the art music performance practice is understood? The underlying notion here is that each individual possesses an inestimable value, free from the constraints of prescribed function, of means-ends rationality: the only condition is a devotion to the practice itself. I follow Macintyre in suggesting that the link to other practices, where it occurs at all, is through virtue. In short, it is an ethics of individual autonomy, predicated on an ethics of work autonomy.[136] As a result, a definition of the higher order, organising virtue of phronesis (practical wisdom) becomes an uneasy balancing act.[137] Here, by way of example, is Taruskin's by now well-known formulation of the outcome of virtue, *authenticity*:

> Authenticity… is knowing what you mean and whence comes that knowledge. And more than that, even, authenticity is knowing what you are, and acting in accordance with that knowledge. It is having what Rousseau called a 'sentiment of being' that is independent of the values, opinions and demands of others.[138]

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[136] Incidentally, the argument that the history of pianism is best told as the history of individual contributions to it makes sense in the light of this: one of the factors which makes a performer great is precisely her *dissimilarity* to others, her sheer individuality. Too great a deference towards the work itself (for example in the form of the score, or 'structure') leads to reification and the eventual neutralising of the performance occasion. (I argue that the overall trajectory of the history of the practice has been towards such a reification.)

[137] Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind,* p.211-231.

[138] Taruskin, *Text and Act*, p.67.

Just as Macintyre's and Zagzebski's ruminations on virtue point to internal and external values, so does Taruskin's formulation, which acknowledges the 'situatedness' of the individual in a practice ('knowing what you mean and whence comes that knowledge') and the transcendent value of individual uniqueness ('independent of the values and demands of others').[139]

The concepts of authenticity and performance share something important: they are both concepts which can be applied to any and every aspect of human life. Every human experience can be viewed as 'authentic', just as any action can be seen as a performance. As a summary quotation which pinpoints the dilemma facing analysts of the concept of 'authenticity' I cannot better these words of Arnos Finkelstein:

> From an ethical point of view every life is authentic, a value in and of itself, not interchangeable with any other human life, a mode sui generis.[140]

In order to narrow down the applicability of these concepts, we need to specify conditions of inclusion. But classificatory conditions mean invoking a general concept, removed from the 'real' (authentic), happening in a unique present (as a performance). Hence the double history of pianism, and of art music performance practice as a whole, is neither a dubious nor a tragic impurity. It is a logical necessity.

In the following sections, I examine two aspects of performance practice with virtue in mind. The first concerns itself with what we might call the evidential base for individual worth – memory – and the second with a performance situation – the competition – in which virtue is made to disappear.

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[139] The literature on authenticity is vast. Taruskin offers Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1972) as a starting point. (See *Text and Act*, p.72-3.)

[140] Quoted in M. A. Bernstein, *Foregone Conclusions: Against Apocalyptic History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p.122.

Case Studies in Performance Virtue: (1) Performance from Memory

Where did the idea of performing from memory originate, and why? What purpose does it serve and what meanings might it have? Lydia Goehr makes a distinction between two modes of performance practised by Liszt: the performance of works and the practice of extemporisation and improvisation clearly involve memory in quite different ways. The question of memorising only really arises when fully composed works enter the fray. She credits Liszt with this innovation, one among many:

> Liszt was… the first to play a whole programme of pre-composed works from memory, which indicated many things, not the least being that he had obviously practised the works before the concert took place.[141]

Goehr is not explicit at this point about the 'many things' this practice might indicate.[142] What *is* clear is that Liszt's innovation was one of extent, rather than principle, as other performers and pedagogues were already recommending playing from memory to students of the instrument. Czerny, for example, offers a negative justification, suggesting that

> … it appears rather childish to be obliged, for every trifle, to turn over one's collection of music; or, when in a strange place, to be always obliged to draw back with the excuse 'that you cannot play anything by heart'.[143]

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[141] Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*, p.240. She cites Alan Walker, *Franz Liszt: The Virtuoso Years* (New York: Ithaca, 1987), p.285, who in turn cites Ludwig Rellstab, *Franz Liszt: Beurtheilungen – Berichte – Lebenskizze* (Berlin, 1842), p.41 ff. Other innovations credited at least in part to Liszt include the name 'recital'; performing works without significant interruptions; including the performer's and composer's names on concert programmes separately; shortening and tightening up programmes and standardising programme notes; positioning the piano at right angles to the audience. (Walker, *Franz Liszt: The Virtuoso Years*, Chapter 8.)

[142] I am not aware of any literature on the topic of the history and significance of memorising music, outside of empirical studies on memory conducted in the field of music psychology, for which see John Sloboda, *The Musical Mind: the Cognitive Psychology of Music* (Oxford Clarendon: 1985), p.94-98.

[143] Karl Czerny, *Letters to a Young Lady, on the Art of Playing the Pianoforte*, trans. J. A. Hamilton, originally published in New York, 1837-41 (New York: Da Capo, 1972), p.41.

For the young ladies he is addressing here spontaneity and independence are to be valued as civilising, social graces.

Clara Schumann was also an early advocate of playing from memory. A recent study by Claudia de Vries claims that it was she who introduced the public to playing from memory, citing her performance without music of Beethoven's Op.57 sonata in Berlin in 1837, and suggesting that this took some courage as it might at that time have been interpreted as a sign of disrespect towards the composer.[144] In a review of a recital she gave in London in 1856, the fact that she performed from memory was deemed worthy of comment.[145]

Over the next hundred years, performing from memory became the norm[146] and yet it cost its practitioners considerable effort, heaping further stress onto an already hazardous undertaking. Clara Schumann's stage nerves were, on one account, not just exacerbated by, but largely attributable to her memory (which she felt she could not rely on);[147] yet she insisted on performing without music throughout her career (and encouraged her pupils to do the same), even though this eventually restricted her choice of repertoire (learning new works becoming more and more arduous with increasing age).[148] The difficulties for the performer were compounded by a further condition which we also take for granted today. The fact that Czerny thought it necessary to draw attention to it makes it clear that it was (and is) not obvious to everyone:

> When playing before others you should particularly endeavour to execute your *well-studied* piece... *especially without coming to a stand-still*; for this... is the most

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[144] Claudia de Vries, *Die Pianistin Clara Wieck-Schumann* (Mainz: Schott, 1996), p.252. The source de Vries cites here is Marian McKenna, *Myra Hess: a Portrait* (London: 1976), p.176. It is worth noting that Clara's father, who was her teacher, placed great weight on aural training (de Vries, *Die Pianistin Clara Wieck-Schumann,* p.126).

[145] 'Except the prelude and fugue by Bach, Mad. Schumann gave the whole programme without book. Her memory is as wonderful as her playing is interesting.' Quoted in de Vries, *Die Pianistin Clara Wieck-Schumann,* p.252, footnote 130.

[146] See, for example, Percy Scholes's comments on 'The New Fashion of Playing from Memory' in *The Mirror of Music: 1844-1944. A Century of Musical Life in Britain as reflected in the Pages of the Musical Times* (London: Novello, 1947, 2 volumes), p.321-2 of volume 1, referred to in de Vries, *Die Pianistin Clara Wieck-Schumann,* p.252.

[147] de Vries, *Die Pianistin Clara Wieck-Schumann*, p.252.

[148] Bach was an exception to the rule here. Scholes makes a similar point. Scholes, *The Mirror of Music*, p.321.

> unpleasant fault which we can commit before an audience.[149]

The unity of a piece is inextricably bound up with its continuity in time.[150]

I have by no means exhausted the reasons one might give for performing from memory. There are prosaic considerations, such as the ugliness and inconvenience of music stands, the noise of page turns, the possible need for a distracting assistant and so on. The appearance of the performer clearly has a bearing on the performance.[151] Nonetheless, it is not immediately clear why performers should have taken upon themselves this extra burden. In trying to make sense of this issue, I need to anticipate my discussion of the history of performance theory. Over the course of the nineteenth century an initially latent conflict of interests gradually manifests itself. This leads to problems in theorising performance which are never properly resolved. Symptomatic of the difficulty are the number of unfulfilled projects left behind in the early years of this century, including fragments by Adorno, Schenker, Schönberg and Kolisch, as Hermann Danuser points out.[152] I will attempt to summarise the sketch he provides. As a starting point he takes up a distinction made by Hegel between two types of performance, which we might label 'rendition' and 're-creation'. The former is linked to an ancient concept of the work as functional genre (such as the Mass, or Motet) while the second, more recent, conception allows the subjectivity of the performer space to unfold. Later theorising by Crelle (1832), Gustav Schilling (1843) and Hanslick map the performer's subjectivity onto a conception of the musical work as itself the embodiment of a composer's unique subjectivity. Following a well-rehearsed argument from Kant, the artistic value of the work lay in its positing its own inherent logic, subsuming received

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[149] Czerny, *Letters to a Young Lady,* p.40. The full quotation runs: 'When playing before others, you should particularly endeavour to execute your *well-studied* piece with tranquillity and self-possession, without hurrying, without allowing your ideas to wander and *more especially without coming to a stand-still*; for this last is the most unpleasant fault which we can commit before an audience.' (Italics in original.)

[150] This is discussed from an analytical viewpoint by Lee B. Brown in 'Musical Works, Improvisation, and the Principle of Continuity' in *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism,* 54 (1996), p.353-369.

[151] For further comments, see Hans-Werner Heister, *Das Konzert: Theorie einer Kulturform* volume 2, (Wilhelmshaven: Heinrichshofen, 1983), p.494-5.

[152] *Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart,* (MGG) volume 9 (Sachteil), (Kassel: Bärenreiter,

generic conventions and rules. Musical works wove together the diverse threads of unity, uniqueness, compositional subjectivity and autonomy, each element implicating and supporting the others. The task of the performer becomes, in Schilling's words, 'the bringing to life of a work of art which is already complete as regards its form and being'.[153] Crudely put, this becomes the new 'success indicator' in performance, supplanting age-old traditions of fulfilling a ritual function and/or pleasing an audience.

In the second half of the nineteenth century the pianist's task comes to be expressed in terms of a commitment to exploring the subjective content of the work:

> It is the task of the interpreting artist to penetrate into all [the] moods [in the work], to understand each in turn and to feel, throughout all details, the unity of meaning in the psychic imagery – warm enthusiasm for the whole. Only where the inner comprehension has been gained *receptively*, can the reproductive interpretation be satisfactory.[154]

As Kullak (and Schilling) suggest, a nascent concept of 'interpretation' is gradually emerging. Authentic 'bringing to life' ['Verlebendigung'] requires prior 'internalising' ['Verinnerlichung']. Memorising the work goes some way to guaranteeing this.[155]

Danuser sees a move in the latter half of the nineteenth century towards more detailed musical analysis as the basis for performance (in the writings of A. B. Marx and Wagner) and Kullak's comments should be read as a commitment to respect the details of the individual work. This is a shift in emphasis, however: the result at this point in the history of the practice is a

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1998), entry on 'Vortrag', by Hermann Danuser, p.1821-1836 (p.1833).

[153] Danuser, MGG, 'Vortrag', p.1825. My translation. The original German text is: 'die Verlebendigung eines bereits nach Form und Wesenheit fertigen Kunstwerks'.

[154] Adolph Kullak, *The Aesthetics of Pianoforte-playing*, trans. Theodore Baker (New York: Da Capo, 1972, original edition of this translation New York, 1893), p.323. The idea here is that 'critical' interpretation is a prerequisite of 'performative' interpretation.

[155] Of related interest here is the emergence and employment of the metaphor of 'organicism' in the nineteenth century and the phases it went through. See Jim Samson, 'Analysis in Context' in *Rethinking Music*, eds. Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p.33-54, p.39.

finely-tuned balance of work and performer, poetry and analysis. as Hanslick's description suggests:

> It is by no means insignificant whether a piece is sung [or played] from memory or whether it is read from the score. The wondrous process of musical reproduction – this re-creative creativity, this discovery of the already discovered – is exposed so vulnerably on the cusp of these oppositions that even externals should not be overlooked when it comes to making one's performance convincing. It is more than of marginal significance when a virtuoso so completely immerses himself in the music [Dichtung = poetry] that he – at the same time controlling it and willingly in its grasp – can deliver it up as if it were a piece of himself.
>
> [Es ist gar nicht so gleichgültig, ob jemand dasselbe Stück frei aus sich heraussingt oder ob er es mit den Augen (aus dem Notenblatt) hervorsuchen muß. Der wunderbare Vorgang der musikalischen Reproduktion, dieses nachschaffenden Schaffens, dieses Finden von bereits Erfundenem, steht so frei auf der Grenze dieser beiden Gegensätze, daß selbst einer Äußerlichkeit nicht verschmäht werden darf, welche den schönen Schein des eigenen begeisterten Vorbringens zu erhöhen vermag. Es ist aber mehr als bloße Äußerlichkeit, wenn ein Virtuose sich so vollständig in die vorzutragende Dichtung einlebt, daß er beherrschend und zugleich willig von ihr beherrscht, sie wie ein Stück seiner selbst loslösen und begeistert freigeben kann.][156]

At this point we might ask what meaning the concept of memory had in mid/late nineteenth-century Europe. Ian Hacking has argued that new sciences of memory were emerging at this time, whose purpose was 'to secularise the soul'.[157] Prior to this the soul had been unavailable to scientific study. Memory was the means, he says, of replacing the ineffable soul with material knowledge. The outcome of these new sciences is a notion of 'personality' as the colour filling the outline of the (autonomous, liberated) individual. What a person has experienced and internalised in the form of memories is what makes that person

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[156] Quoted in Heister, *Das Konzert*, p.495. My translation.

[157] Ian Hacking, *Rewriting the Soul: Multiple Personality and the Sciences of Memory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), p.5 and chapters 14-18.

uniquely and authentically different. The uniqueness of occasions *constitutes* the uniqueness of persons. Hence a performance from memory becomes – potentially, at least – an expression of the performer's individuality.

The idea I return to again and again in this study is that the conceptual ecology of performance has transformed itself in the twentieth century as virtuoso performance practice became discredited and the concept of Werktreue, or fidelity to the work, gained the upper hand. What the performer comes to be left with is the right – or the duty – to generate a personal interpretation of the work, but, as Adorno is at pains to point out, the freedom of the performer is small and often overestimated.[158] The smaller the space the performer is granted, the closer her task to mere 'execution' (and this is indeed what Hindemith and Stravinsky, to name but two, urged). We might think of the concept of interpretation in two ways: as product (or finished object) and process (as a set of strategies for dealing with eventualities). In Hanslick's terms the former represents the control of the performer over his material, and the latter the control of the material over him ('… beherrschend und zugleich willig von ihr beherrscht': that is to say, controlling and allowing the music to control the performance process). As a technician following instructions, as 'executant', the performer is firmly in control of the music; at the same time, it (i.e. the music) loses its control over him in the performance moment itself, because it is reifed into a rigid, objectified 'interpretation'. This development makes sense in a concert environment which is purged of irregularities: *standardised*, is the term I used above. In the latter years of the twentieth century, performers who are overly free are anachronistic: as Cherkassky was in his last years, for example.

This leads us into the issue of the 'paradox of spontaneity'.[159] Spontaneity is important because the expressive content of a work can only be authentic if it appears unrehearsed: genuine emotion cannot *appear* to be the product of calculation, however true this may be in fact. She must be overcome by the music. Hence the performer is faced with a constant need to pretend:

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[158] Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music*, p.195-6.

[159] This is a topic I return to in chapter four.

> ... the performer [Ausführende has the sense of executant] in accordance with his nature... continually strives to make the music [Material] sound as if he is creating it in the moment of rendition [Wiedergabe].
> [... der Ausführende seiner Natur gemäß... noch immer danach trachtet, das Material so erklingen zu lassen, als ob er es im Augenblick der Wiedergabe selbst erschüfe.][160]

These words – Krenek's, written in 1944 – problematise performance above all for the performer. We know this cannot be completely true, but it has become a convention to 'believe' (or rather, overlook) it. As I have made clear, it becomes problematic when the notion of interpretation is identified as a preconceived fixity, rather than imaginative response, moment by moment, to the unique demands of the occasion.

However, simply recalling the music from memory becomes suspect, the moment memorising and recalling become mere techniques, as opposed to forms of committed engagement with the subjective content of the work in varying performance contexts. It is not surprising that performers will want to regain what they see as lost creative ground. For example, Heister quotes Karajan:

> Playing from memory... is not a feat of memory... but the reproduction of something which is completely inside of you. It emerges from inside yourself, without your having to think about it consciously.
>
> [Auswendigspiel... ist keine Gedächtnisleistung... sondern die Wiedergabe einer Sache, die vollkommen in einem drin ist. Sie entsteigt dem Innern, ohne daß man darüber nachdenken müßte.][161]

What Karajan wants to say – and it is both a refutation of 'performance-as-execution' and a reiteration of Hanslick's point about performance as a form of 'giving' – is that he is doing more in performing music than merely following instructions. He is delivering up a part of his being.

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[160] Krenek, quoted in Heister, *Das Konzert*, p.494. My translation.
[161] Quoted in Heister, *Das Konzert*, p.494. My translation.

My argument here is not merely about the embattled nature of the performance territory as rival notions of work-interpretation jostle for position. It is about the role of memory in performance as something more than a mere skill or practical convenience. What seems to have happened is that memorised performance gradually loses status as a virtue – as an index of the performer's personality – and becomes, by the mid twentieth century an empty convention of performance practice.[162] (One might say that performing from music comes to be a vice.) It appears a necessary convention, because the practice of performance has come to mean the performance of a considered, more or less fixed interpretation. So performance from memory no longer carries a meaning for the audience: it has become absorbed into the range of skills which are prerequisite to the public presentation of art music.

There is an element of oversimplification here: not all the music performed was amenable to memorisation. Clara Schumann was not alone in preferring to play Bach with the music in front of her. Bach's patterns of counterpoint do not usually imply patterns of physical movement and fugal writing requires considerable mental exertion if it is to be committed to memory successfully. When Claudio Arrau moved to consolidate his reputation in Germany in the inter-war years, he sought a task that would maximally impress the musical world. He chose to perform the complete keyboard works (i.e. Klavierwerke) of J. S. Bach from memory in a cycle of twelve recitals in Berlin (in 1935-6). He says of this undertaking:

> … there was a wish to do something outstanding, that would prove what a serious musician I was. Because at that time people were saying that I was a very good technician, but rather the virtuoso type. That was the second aspect – to help my career. But the first idea was to have the *satisfaction* of having in my brain this tremendous amount of great music. People said 'Is it a stunt?' A little bit maybe, it was. But mostly not.[163]

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[162] Scholes says 'what had begun as an attractive novelty was now becoming the normal thing; pianists *had* to memorise'. He is writing of the last two decades of the nineteenth century here, when the first advertising for memory-trainers appeared in the *Musical Times* (they were later to become a common feature). Scholes, *The Mirror of Music,* vol. 1, p.321.

[163] Joseph Horowitz, *Conversations with Arrau* (London: Collins, 1982), p.72.

Here memorising is tied both to internalising the music and yet also to selling the performances to the public. Arrau consciously used his memory in precisely the way virtuosi traditionally flirt with physical risk in performance and this extraordinary excess – and success[164] – drew attention to the act of memory in itself. His achievement became a legend: an act of arrogant defiance of human fallibility.

Within the context of high modernism, the advent of a method of studying the piano which relies entirely on memory will come as no surprise. The Gieseking-Leimer method, developed early this century, involves learning the music without touching the instrument. (Ironically this favours musicians with an eidetic memory.) Of course, this bid for disembodied purity misunderstands the composite nature of memory in the musical performance. It has long since been realised that the pianist's recall-memory is a recipe: piano pedagogues typically arrive at four different ingredients: visual, acoustic, motoric and analytical.[165]

In conclusion I return to my opening question: does playing from memory constitute a performance virtue? My answer is that it did for a time, but has been demoted to the realm of skill (for the performer) or convention (for the audience). It ceases to be an option for the performer: it no longer counts as an expressive innovation. Too many factors argue for it. The reason for this has to do in part with the changing notion of interpretation away from a mixture of knowledge-plus-improvisation towards knowledge-alone (objectification), where as many of the decisions about sound production as possible are taken before the performance event itself.

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[164] In fact Arrau had to reschedule a couple of concerts after a small memory slip, which he put down to exhaustion at having practised so hard. Horowitz, *Conversations with Arrau*, p.72.

[165] See, for example, Georgy Sandor, *On Piano Playing* (New York: Schirmer, 1981), p.194. Sandor offers an overview of the topic, training strategies, tips for overcoming special weaknesses and much reassurance that improvement is possible.

Case Studies in Performance Virtue: (2) Competitions (Absent Virtue)

Consider what happens to performance in unusual, or marginal situations. For example, how is performance changed by the addition of a competitive context? Although it is often maintained that there is a surfeit of competitions in musical life – and that competitiveness in music is harmful – it would be wrong to conclude that this is a recent phenomenon. Competitions have long been a feature of public musical life. Their purpose is to establish a value: who is better, and who is best? These are questions which consistently fascinate. It is arguable, however, that there is something intrinsic to the nature of competitiveness in art music that effectively forestalls our reaching unambiguous results. I would like to demonstrate this with a brief example.

The Leeds Piano Competition, which was first held in 1963, was for a time (and perhaps still is) a major event in the musical calendar. Former prize winners and finalists are among the most respected contemporary players. Fanny Waterman, its founder, is nonetheless very guarded in her claims as to its effectiveness in locating the best in the field:

> Do the finest pianists always win first prize? [...] My reply is that the jury... has come to the conclusions in its musical wisdom that *this* competitor shall be proclaimed a winner.[166]

As an answer this is the epitome of tact. She goes on to emphasise the many things a jury *cannot* know, such as whether the winner will have the necessary physical and emotional resources to deal with the stresses of concert life. A great performer, she claims 'must have inclination and imagination, backed up by application, concentration and determination'.[167] In other words, a sustained high-flying career within the pianistic practice requires general 'framing' virtues, of the kind that connect across other practices (though imagination is, as

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[166] Thompson, *Piano Competition*, p.xiii.

[167] Thompson, *Piano Competition*, p.xiv. I have already referred to this list in footnote 135

I have said, a special case). The competition 'frame' is, of course, much smaller, consisting typically of about four stages, with several works to be played at each stage, culminating in a concerto performance. (Leeds has followed this model for decades with only minor variations.[168]) The jury panel is made up of senior musical establishment figures, with a largish percentage of pianists, either still active or teaching, and a co-ordinating chairperson. What are their criteria of judgement?

> From the outset Fanny [Waterman] and Marion [Harewood] determined that the emphasis in their competition would be on musicianship, not the kind of flashy technique that had already given some competitions a bad name. Beauty of tone was Fanny's top priority, followed by musical integrity, rhythmic vitality and artistic imagination.[169]

These are indeed the noblest of standards. Elsewhere, though, a rather more prosaic motive for setting up the competition is invoked, specifically the poor standards of technical proficiency among pianists in Britain, measured against continental counterparts.[170]

This tension between measurable skills, or 'technique', and unquantifiables such as 'musicianship' and 'artistic imagination' poses a constant threat to a competition's credibility. It is ultimately irresolvable. It exploded in the second competition (in 1966) when both the chairman, William Glock, and his deputy, Hans Keller were forced to recognise a majority decision in favour of a candidate they felt was undeserving (Rafael Orozco). Glock stresses in his account how the organisers tried to learn from the experience the next time the competition was held, when Radu Lupu, the eventual winner, was only admitted to the final stage as a result of special pleading, effectively changing the competition rules.[171] Hans Keller's analysis of the 'competition problem' seems to me to penetrate to the heart of the matter, even if his

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above.

[168] Ibid, appendix, p.242-261.

[169] Ibid, p.18.

[170] Ibid, p.13.

[171] William Glock, *Notes in Advance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p.162-3.

proposed solution issues in an absurdity. He claimed that the 1966 decision in favour of Orozco (over Victoria Postnikova, his and Glock's preferred candidate) was due to technique being overvalued by the panel. His proposal was:

> ...to remove the overweight of instrumental expert opinion from the jury. A piano competition should not be judged chiefly by pianists, however distinguished, because their verdict will subtly be influenced by technical considerations at the expense of ultimate musical values.[172]

In a competition, 'best' comes to mean foregrounding what Keller calls the 'sporting aspect'. His proposed solution – which is fully congruent with the definition of evaluation proposed by Barbara Herrnstein Smith above[173] – was to share the prizes equally among the leading talents because 'above a certain level you're not "better" or "worse", but *different*, and it's the difference that makes you interesting.'[174]

Because the sporting aspect – the possession of a reliable technique – is the only certainty, it comes to be valued by participants above all else. The necessary narrow focus on a few performances, all of which are crucial for success, discourages risk-taking, which is the concomitant of innovative, imaginative performance. The lack of criteria among jurors to evaluate originality in performance means that, in the long run, technique will become a fall-back point of consensus, a lowest common denominator. So when Charles Rosen says that 'the trouble with competitions is that far too often only dull but worthy pianists get through', he is describing the logical outcome of art music competitions.[175] A reliable, uncontroversial performance style translates into technical precision honed to the point of absolute predictability. Interpretation

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[172] Thompson, *Piano Competition*, p.44-5.

[173] In *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, eds. Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p.181.

[174] Thompson, *Piano Competition*, p.45. Keller has written elsewhere of the relationship between sport and music-making. He argues that we should think of the consistency that comes from practice in both sport and art as 'mastery'; and that (consistent) mastery is achieved at the expense of (inconsistent, unpredictable) genius. He refers to 'the curse of mastery'. See 'Sport and Art: the Concept of Mastery', in: Hans Keller, *Hans Keller: Essays on Music*, ed. Christopher Wintle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p.26-9.

rigidifies. The uniqueness of the occasion has no part to play. Hence any minor irregularities in the setting or instrument will assume great significance for the performer. A further consequence will be that the competitors will select music which is 'context-proof' i.e. does not rely on unusual or subtle timbral effects which a poorly adjusted piano or an odd acoustic might destroy.[176] In short, the ecology of performance inside competitions is quite different from that outside.

It is easy to spot miscarriages of justice in retrospect. If it seems that competitions do in fact often select worthy winners, this is no doubt a tribute to those performers who continue entering until they eventually succeed. Many victors fall by the wayside. We might conclude by saying that the smaller the frame within which a performance is judged, the less virtues count and the more important rules and rehearsals become.

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[175] Thompson, *Piano Competition*, p.117.

[176] There is a great deal of insider-lore about pieces that are good (or bad) in competition or examination settings.

Chapter 3: Performance

Part One: A Supra-Disciplinary Orientation

Practices ultimately consist of series of performances. How are they categorised? This apparently simple question is in fact a consuming philosophical problem about which little can be said with absolute certainty. It is commonly posed in terms of objects, concepts and categories: concepts are the mental identities of objects in the external world, and categories – which stand in a mutually defining relationship with concepts – are the means by which objects are classified. As in the case of the chicken and the egg, neither concept nor category is prior. In this scheme, object is a crude shorthand: we might further distinguish between objects, events and processes. The distinctions here are by no means hard and fast, as all objects are processes, viewed at the appropriate time scale, and all events have a processual aspect.[1]

In the classical definition of a concept, necessary and sufficient conditions are specified. This, as we have seen (Chapter two, **A Note on Concepts** above), is not an accurate reflection of human psychology. Boundaries are fuzzy and permeable, though not infinitely so; they are historical, and undergo revision; and they are therefore contestable. This is as true of the term 'performance' as of all the terms I make use of in its definition.[2]

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[1] I have no wish here to do more than point to issues that have been the subject of extended debate throughout the history of (western) philosophy, under the rubrics of ontology and epistemology. The distinction I propose is common enough, if ultimately poorly understood. Its rootedness in natural language is reflected in analyses of grammar, such as that employed by Geoffrey Leech and Jan Svartvik in *A Communicative Grammar of English* (London: Longman, 1975). The phenomenologist Roman Ingarden, whose writings on music I consider in more detail later, suggests it in *The Work of Music and the Problem of its Identity*, trans. Adam Czerniawski, ed. Jean G.Harrell (London: Macmillan, 1986) p.10, footnote 1.

[2] For brief comments of similar import see Jim Samson: 'Analysis in Context', in *Rethinking*

Performance: An Essentially Contested Concept

The term performance has come to have a bewildering range of applications both in the contemporary academic world and in everyday life. A consequence of this is that it is increasingly difficult to establish common ground between divergent usage. Actually, this could be said of any number of general terms – such as analysis or culture – but it is striking how in recent years many different academic disciplines have alighted on just this term, claiming it as an analytical tool, even as a 'term of art', and decking it out with sometimes highly technical specific meanings. Why is this? There are two issues here. Firstly, why not reserve unfamiliar but already extant words, or invent new ones, if it is a matter of primarily technical use? Clearly current colloquial use must be doing important semantic work, which commentators wish to draw on.[3] Secondly, what is so attractive about 'performance' just now? And if different disciplines are *stipulating* divergent technical meanings, is there any chance of (re)establishing a common semantic core?

Marvin Carlson, in his recent book, *Performance: a Critical Introduction,* offers reassurance:

> If we consider performance as an essentially contested concept, this will help us to understand the futility of seeking some overarching semantic field to cover such seemingly disparate usages as the performance of an actor, of a schoolchild, of an automobile.[4]

The phrase 'essentially contested concept' was invented by W.B.Gallie, and it deserves a moment's reflection.[5] Gallie's analysis of a handful of paradigmatic ECCs – and these include religion, art, science and democracy – throws up a

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Music, eds. Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p.35.

[3] Nicholas Cook has addressed this point in a related context, in which he says that '[t]here is nothing worse than a theoretical vocabulary that tries to take possession of indispensably ordinary English words', adding that the terms he adopts (such as 'conformance') are outside everyday use and so do not interfere with it. There is, of course, a potential conflict here which in the case of concepts in common use (such as 'performance') is unavoidable. See *Analysing Musical Multimedia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), p.ix.

[4] Marvin Carlson, *Performance: a Critical Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1996), p.5.

number of issues. Without quite saying so himself, Gallie tends towards the view that concepts of a more specific nature might also qualify: in other words, he is saying something about the instability of language per se. The consequence is that 'to use an ECC means to use it against other uses and to recognise that one's own use of it has to be maintained against these other uses.'[6] This can be understood in part as a paraphrase of the structuralist idea of meaning arising from the definition of what is in terms of what is not. Note, too, the Foucaultian ring to this sense of 'maintenance'.

A strategy Gallie, as a philosopher of history, finds sympathetic is to try to establish how different meanings have arisen, rather than to mediate between them. This to a large extent is what Carlson's 'critical' genealogy of performance does and, as far as it goes – and it goes a long way – it is very successful. It will be an important source in the discussion which follows. However it is by no means comprehensive, for all its range. The index lists extensive references to gender, feminism, autobiographical performance, the avant-garde, politics, dance, the circus... but, surprisingly, no separate reference for music.[7] In fact this is by no means unusual in discussions of the discipline of 'performance', understood as shorthand for 'performance art': for historical reasons, theatrical understandings predominate. It is as if music – especially classical music – as a performing art occupies a niche of specialised pure abstraction which the most prominent theorists have felt unable to sully.[8] Musical performance does appear to stand apart from other kinds of performance and we might take this is a premonition of its distinctiveness.

Definition: a Preliminary Orientation

A performance, I contend, is a concatenation of agent(s), event(s) and circumstance(s). I assumed as much at the outset of the previous chapter. Just

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[5] W. B. Gallie, *Philosophy and the Historical Understanding* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1964), ch.8, p.157-191; see also Carlson, *Performance*, p.1.

[6] Gallie, *Philosophy and the Historical Understanding*, p.161.

[7] Carlson, *Performance*, p.245. The entry for music in the index says 'see under *cabaret*'.

[8] The *Compact Oxford English Dictionary* (Second edition, 1989/94) lists 7 sub-definitions of

about anything, anywhere can count as 'performance'. provided that there is some evidence of intentionality (or causality). I suggest the 'natural' as an oppositional term to the 'performed' as a means of excluding those objects. events and processes that human beings can neither control. nor enlist as instruments of performance (erupting volcanoes, for example). I would like to refine and extend this crude hermeneutics, by suggesting that we think of the concatenation of agency, eventhood and circumstance in the following way. A performance is always identifiably:

1. Of something (a text, script, role, work…)
2. By someone (a performer, actor, agent…)
3. With the aid of something (a prop, instrument, piece of technology, part of the body…)
4. For a purpose (reason, with an intention, commitment…)
5. In a setting (location, place, context, scene, stage…)
6. On an occasion (at a time…)
7. For an observer (audience, listener, self…)

This prepositional organisation will serve as an initial informal checklist of elements when I come to examine other definitions.[9] The concatenation (nexus, intersection…) constitutes a matrix and a performance is *the matrix as a whole*: any attempt to remove any element from it turns it into something else. Thinking of this definition as a 'performance' of 'performance' leads of course to paradox and absurdity: in the normal case, any attempt to preserve or record a performance must of necessity fail. There is no true identity across time: as Roger Scruton says, nothing is ever 'the same again'.[10] Nonetheless, different definitions of performance balance the elements in different ways and employ different terms to talk of similar functions (as the bracketed alternative terms

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'perform', and music receives overt mention only in the last of these.

[9] I acknowledge here the influence of Kenneth Burke, whose approach to 'motive' proceeds from a similar 'situational' analysis, in terms of 'what was done (Act), when or where it was done (Scene), who did it (Agent), how he did it (Agency), and why (Purpose)'. See *A Grammar of Motives* (Cleveland: Meridian, 1962), p.xvii. Burke is quoted in Carlson, *Performance,* p.37-8.

imply). The recurring elements are typically a concern with a notion of text and how it is stored; the framing of the text in space and time: the nature and status of the observer; and the issues that agency imply, such as identity and intention. The sum of competing definitions is dilute generality. Performance at the most abstract level – and notice how the metaphors of frame, focus and level coincide here – has been described by the ethnolinguist Richard Bauman as 'a consciousness of doubleness'.[11] This doubleness can ultimately be thought of as a meeting of text and context, a reification of product within process, a dialectic of the particular and the general. The very notion of consciousness itself contains within it a paradoxical 'doubleness': a self aware of its selfhood.

Some Competing Definitions of Performance: (1) The Social Sciences

In Carlson's account, the range of disciplines which have made a pitch for performance as a key term include anthropology, ethnology, sociology, psychology, linguistics and performance art. The final section of his book deals with relationships between performance, identity, politics and postmodernity. Though much of the groundwork dates from earlier, the 1960s and 70s saw a particularly intense and fruitful period of theoretical interplay between social science and theatre studies, at a time when performance art was also emancipating itself as a discipline.[12] My point in the subsequent commentary will be twofold: firstly, to give a taste of just how varied are the uses the term 'performance' has been put to; and secondly – and this is a more challenging undertaking – to suggest how each discipline develops its own self-serving 'hermeneutic' of performance which tends to hover around a specific element (drawn from my checklist above). Note that the other, subsidiary elements never completely disappear from view: they are merely reiterated in different forms. Each particular 'foregrounding' should be read as a consequence of the

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[10] Roger Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Music* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), p.106.
[11] Quoted in Carlson, *Performance*, p.5.
[12] The role of the theatre critic Richard Schechner in this rapprochement is seminal. See

discipline's self-understanding. The self-understanding of disciplines shifts over time, as do the meanings of their key concepts (and it is not always clear what leads the way). For all that, I would hope to identify a relationship between the discipline's overall aims and its particular appropriation of the performance concept. These sketches are partial, simplified and highly contestable… unavoidably so.

1. Anthropology/Ethnography. In the science of human culture at the most general level there has been a marked tendency to think in terms of how human behaviour becomes 'performance' through 'marking' or 'framing' – making it stand out against an unperformed background – and what such a performance achieves i.e. the consequences of its having taken place. Milton Singer introduced the term 'cultural performance' to the discipline in 1959 to describe discrete events set apart from reality (such as theatre events, weddings, or religious festivals).[13] Gregory Bateson's elaboration of the concept of 'play' and how individuals signal the boundary between the 'playful' and 'serious' was a further important theoretical step, later elaborated in different ways by Huizinga, Caillois and Clifford Geertz.[14] Victor Turner, perhaps the most important theorist in this field, later shifted the concept of performance away from 'that which is contained within a frame' onto the threshold, an area of 'in-betweenness', which becomes a site of either (a) separation, (b) transition or (c) reintegration within a social order (for which the terms 'preliminal', 'liminal' and 'postliminal' – respectively – have been adopted).[15] He too was influential in importing theatrical imagery into anthropology, along with a notion of the performance as scripted, through his extended collaboration with Richard Schechner (who described performance in a much quoted phrase as 'restored

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Carlson, *Performance,* p.13-14.

[13] Carlson, *Performance,* p.16.

[14] Gregory Bateson, 'A Theory of Play and Fantasy', originally written in 1954, later republished in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (San Francisco: Chandler, 1972). See also Carlson, *Performance,* p.18. Huizinga and Callois's work is described later in the same chapter (Carlson, *Performance,* p.25-28). Geertz's distinction between 'deep play' and 'shallow play', which bears some resemblance to Turner's distinction between the liminal and the liminoid, is discussed on p.24.

[15] Carlson, *Performance,* p.21.

behaviour'[16]). Turner later developed a distinction between 'liminal' and 'liminoid' performance, where the former term signifies activity which is less scripted and thus potentially questions cultural conventions. Later theorists, such as Colin Turnbull and Dwight Conquergood, have examined the role of the observer as implicated in the performance (and in particular the position of the researching anthropologist in the field), concluding that objectivity and neutrality were chimerical values.[17]

Birth, death, courtship, marriage, friendship, work: social rituals associated with these states and events are inescapably central to lived life. They are the content of the discipline. As such it would seem logical that the anthropologist's conception of performance should be centred on *ritual*, the *frame* (and a multitude of related concepts dealing with *threshold* and *transition*), the ambiguities of *play* and an implication that observers also perform. At the heart of this conceptual net is the relationship of performance to *change*, that the 'before' and 'after' of a performance are different worlds.

2. Sociology. The work of Erving Goffman has had an overwhelming impact in the social sciences. Particularly relevant to our concerns is the influential early study *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, published in 1959, in which the notion of the self as consisting of a repertoire of roles employed in a sequence of structured performances is elaborated (and indeed 'Performances' is the title of the first chapter). Performance is defined as 'all the activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some influence on the observers'.[18] The typical setting is a social establishment, which is '... any place surrounded by fixed barriers to perception in which a particular type of activity regularly takes place'.[19] Goffman thus proposes a quasi-Aristotelian unity of time, place

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[16] Carlson, *Performance,* p.4. Schechner's work has been extensive and influential.
[17] Carlson, *Performance,* p.31. Conquergood's five stances towards the ethnography of performance (discussed in 'Performing as a Moral Act: Ethical Dimensions of the Ethnography of Performance', in *Literature in Performance*, 5 (1985), 1-13) are relevant here, especially to ethnomusicology.
[18] Goffman, Erving, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (USA: Anchor Books, 1959; second edition Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), p.32, quoted in Carlson, *Performance,* p.37-8.
[19] Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, p.210.

and action as a framing constraint on performance – one of his later books deals specifically with the concept of framing[20] – as well as stressing its function, which is to influence an audience. As far as the content of performance goes, anything can count: analyses take a 'strip of experience', which is simply a 'raw batch of occurrences (of whatever status in reality) that one wants to draw attention to…'.[21] An important secondary issue is thus audience interpretation and the communicative success of a text or role.[22]

There is an inherent tension in such theorising. On the one hand it is willing to consider any behavioural material as grist to the mill of performance in support of a view of social reality as 'constructed'.[23] Yet it threatens to void a distinction between the improvised and the rehearsed, between self and role, in setting no limits to content. One could go further and claim that the Kantian conception of an autonomous moral self as a coordinator and overseer of roles disappears (and with it such notions as a distinction between ethics – taken as a code guiding behaviour – and aesthetics – in the sense used by Kingsbury in his analysis of the conservatory, as 'observed behaviour'[24]). It further problematises an already fragile notion of 'authenticity'. This undoubtedly parodies Goffman's position, and to be fair to him, he has in some later work pointed to the limits of this form of determinism;[25] but as Carlson points out, Goffman generally downplays the improvisatory, ad hoc aspect of performance: performance as exploratory play.[26] At issue here is (once again) the status of text and code: how finely detailed is it? How much space is there for originality? Goffman has been much criticised for his deterministic views by, among others, Bruce Wilshire

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[20] Goffman, *Frame Analysis: an essay on the organisation of experience* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975).

[21] Goffman, *Frame Analysis*, quoted in Carlson, *Performance,* p.50.

[22] Umberto Eco has contributed importantly here: see, for example, 'The Semiotics of Theatrical Performance' in *The Drama Review*, volume 21, 1977, p.107-117.

[23] Here the key text is Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967).

[24] Henry Kingsbury, *Music, Talent, and Performance: a Conservatory Cultural System* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988). See my discussion of this work in chapter 2.)

[25] For example, in *Forms of Talk* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981). In this regard, see the comments by Grahame F. Thompson in 'Approaches to Performance', in *Screen,* 26 (1985), 78-90, (p.80-81). In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Goffman distinguishes between performer, character, individual and self. Within this constellation, the self is epiphenomenal. At the same time, Goffman is keen to point to the rhetorical nature of his theatrical metaphor. See 'Staging and the Self', *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life,* p.244-6.

(whose work is discussed by Carlson[27]); and Alasdair Macintyre has provided a penetrating critique of Goffman's position and the Sartrean existentialist antithesis, in which the role, where it exists at all, is seen as merely imposed and ceremonial.[28] On the notion of identity as both given and created, Jonathan Glover's analysis occupies a sensible middle ground.[29]

Sociologists have sought mechanisms to demonstrate how human behaviour is formed, or determined by society. In order to become an object of study, society must be identifiably patterned: it must exhibit structure. The implication is that the more structure there is, the more significance the discipline will acquire. Thus individual behaviour has been examined in terms of patterns. We can usefully summarise the key opposition (variously formulated) as between *role* and *self*, which together constitute *identity*. (Behind this lies the ethical notion of *authenticity*.) The role implies in turn *text(s)* and *code(s)* (language, semiotic systems). And for a performance to attain objecthood, it needs a defined boundary, which is its *frame*.

3. Linguistics. In this field the term performance occurs as the partner of the (privileged) term 'competence' in Chomsky's well-known distinction (now considered obsolete by him). It arguably builds on Saussure's prior opposition of 'langue' and 'parole'. Linguistics has, over the last fifty years, fanned out into the subdisciplines of phonetics/phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics. Increasingly, this initial, widely accepted emphasis on an underlying fixed ('deep') structure – of which performance is a corrupted variant – has shifted, as linguists became interested in the role context plays in determining meaning. Wittgenstein's influence lay behind Austin's theory of speech acts (dating originally from the mid-50s), later elaborated in different ways by Searle, Grice and others.[30] An important recent contributor to this field

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[26] Carlson, *Performance,* p.50.
[27] Carlson, *Performance,* p.44.
[28] Alasdair Macintyre, *After Virtue* (London: Duckworth, 1981; second edition 1985), p.32-5 and p.115-117.
[29] Jonathan Glover, *I: The Philosophy and Psychology of Personal Identity* (London: Penguin, 1988).
[30] J. L. Austin, *How To Do Things with Words* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1962); John Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968).

has been Dan Sperber.[31] In all this work we can see a partial rapprochement with the political concerns of anthropology and the constructivist theme of sociology: what is the status of 'reality' vis à vis language? One of the central tenets of speech act theory is that there is a discrete world of language. As Charles Taylor says:

> Meaning... is for a subject, of something, in a field. This distinguishes it from linguistic meaning which has a four- and not a three-dimensional structure. Linguistic meaning is for subjects and in a field, but it is the meaning of signifiers and it is about a world of referents.[32]

Within this world, to say something is to do something. Further to this are a speaker's intentions and the effects of a speech act (illocutionary force and perlocutionary effect, respectively). Much theoretical effort has gone into trying to discover just how much of language use is 'performative' in this sense (as opposed to descriptive, or 'constative'[33]). Nowadays, the subdiscipline of speech act theory is normally referred to as 'pragmatics', a term first used by the semiotician Charles Morris, who broadened its application by defining it as 'the science of the relation of signs to interpreters'.[34]

One important issue arising from speech act theory concerns the ambiguity of the 'act'. At what point does speech resolve into an act? What is the relationship of process to product, and at what point(s) can we consider the speech as *performed*? This is important, because to focus on the effects of a speech act is to focus on the changes it brings about and hence to politicise it. Yet it may not always be clear what the 'unit of performance' is. I believe that a distinction between fluid speech and reified writing – between process and product – is crucial. It is apt to be overlooked.

The key concept within linguistics has always been the nature of *communication*. Chomsky can be said to have invented the subject matter of

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[31] Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson, *Relevance: Communication and Cognition* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986, second edition 1995).
[32] Charles Taylor, 'Hermeneutics and Politics', in *Critical Sociology*, ed. Paul Connerton (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), p.153-193, (p.162).
[33] The term is Austin's, from *How To Do Things with Words*.
[34] Quoted in Carlson, *Performance*, p.61.

modern linguistics by focusing on the invariance of the underlying *code* (or what he called 'deep structure'). Pragmatics explores how *context* qualifies linguistic meaning. Linguists have also clarified the nature of the language world as in a sense 'interposed' between us and 'reality'. In this sense. language brings its own frame with it; rhetorical forms are frames within the language medium itself.

4. Cognitive Science. There is a telling use of the term 'performance' found throughout scientific discourse, so familiar that we are liable to overlook it completely.[35] Scientists 'perform' experiments. What exactly does this mean? The experimental method is about observing the behaviour of animate or inanimate objects (processes, events…), whereby the behaviour (or activity) is framed (or isolated) in such a way that only one variable at a time is observed (by an 'audience' of scientists). The 'performance' is repeated to establish a mean value for a class of experiments which are as near to identical as possible. Hence performance has come to signify a predictable value (outcome, result, achievement). Some points to note: this sense of the word is retrospective, as it signifies an outcome; it is not confined to (or even usually associated with) intentionality, and what that can entail (skill, commitment etc.), but rather with cause and effect; and, most importantly, performed experiments are valued for their repeatability, not their uniqueness. The content of performance in this sense is reduced to a repeatable 'text'.

Cognitive science reintroduces intentionality into the performance paradigm. The use to which cognitive scientists habitually put the term performance follows Chomsky's distinction between performance and competence. Competence refers to something stored (such as an ability) and performance to its use in real time. Within the field of Artificial Intelligence (AI) research. attempts to model human competence/performance soon identified what has become known as 'the frame problem'. In essence this concerns the need to limit the amount of information available and stored by an

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[35] This is an area Carlson does not discuss.

actor – mechanical or human – in the real world.[36] There has been much debate and controversy about how, if at all, this matter can be resolved. In an attempt to address pressing criticisms, the AI researcher Marvin Minsky developed the concept of the frame as a structure which represents stereotypical situations in terms of features that are common to a range of such situations, with slots for features which can vary their values. The frame is thus an heuristic device. The system is recursive, as frames can be contained within frames. In effect, the frame separates text from context, but recursion allows the frame itself to be the text within another frame, thus potentially blurring this distinction.[37] The 'text' is viewed as a role within a framed speech-led interaction: decisions are taken in order to reach a goal (i.e. to achieve some kind of desired change). A continuous stream of feedback is used to update the contents of the frame. Decisions can be stored in the form of rules with a hypothetical component: if X, then do Y. Human processual performance can thus be described in terms of rules and (framed) representations linked by a feedback loop. Crude though this sketch may be, its relevance to musical (as opposed to literary) performance is, I think, immediately apparent: it describes the manner in which a performer constantly monitors and updates a 'performative' interpretation during the act of performance, what Andras Schiff felicitously referred to as doing running repairs.[38]

Competing Definitions: (2) The Arts

1. The most important area here is performance art. Roselee Goldberg's history of this field – the first of its kind when originally published in 1979 – is basically a study of twentieth-century avant-garde theatre.[39] This is both in

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[36] *A Companion to Cognitive Science*, eds. William Bechtel and George Graham (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), p.54-62, (p.57).

[37] Bechtel and Graham, *A Companion to Cognitive Science*, p.61. Minsky further links his term to the psychologist F. C. Bartlett's use of the word 'schema' and Kuhn's term 'paradigm'.

[38] In an interview in the *Journal of the European Piano Teachers Association (EPTA)*, No.36, vol. 12 (Oct.1991), p.9-12, he says: 'The art of a musician is to play a work in its entirety, not in separate bits, doing continuously some repairs.' (p.12)

[39] RoseLee Goldberg, *Performance Art: from Futurism to the Present* (London: Thames and Hudson, second edition 1988).

keeping with, and a contribution to, a theatrical orientation in performance studies. Within this history, two pronounced waves of activity stand out: the Dadaists of the post World War One years, whose work was partly anticipated by Eric Satie in the musical field; and the emergence of performance art in the form of staged multimedia happenings in the late 1950s. Here John Cage was a seminal figure. As Carlson notes (following Moholy-Nagy), an experimental tradition arose in which the traditional concept of the performer as interpreter of an already existing (usually literary) text was put to one side in favour of the performer as creator of an act or action.[40] Accompanying this was a move towards mixed-media events and a shift from the presentation of a scripted product to a process more or less characterised by spontaneity and chance. The Dadaist emphasis on social dissent and protest gave way in the second wave of the avant-garde to more thoughtful, opaque experimentation, which explored diverse approaches in a rather more systematic way.[41]

In the later decades of the century, performance art has emancipated itself as a practice and developed distinctive thematic strands. For example, the issue of identity and the body (particularly the female body) has provided a central theme and the continuing exploration of multimedia a characteristic mode. In particular, performance art has become closely associated with a politics of resistance to or outright rejection of commodification (and an underlying unease with free market capitalism). This work – often absurd or bizarre, frequently funny and all too susceptible to parody[42] – is underpinned by a distinctive ontology of performance, which I will be considering in more detail presently.

By way of summary we could say that performance art problematises the text, not in terms of its content but as such. It asks: is it possible to deny text? Or: how can we evade the notion of text? It is, in short, meta-textual, using text to comment on its own possibilities and limits. Thus it focuses on

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[40] Carlson, *Performance*, p.92.

[41] So for example Richard Kostelanetz distinguishes between four different genres of happening: pure happenings, staged happenings, kinetic environments, and staged performances. See Carlson, *Performance*, p.98.

[42] A useful text here is Suzi Gablik's critique of modernism, *Has Modernism Failed?* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1984), especially chapter 3, entitled 'Anxious Objects: Modes of Cultural

experimentation, often together with a theatrically inspired insistence on *visual display*, sometimes overtly skilful. Above all, performance art in underscoring uniqueness exemplifies *difference.*

2. Literary theory: Within this field the concept of performance has a role in, among others, the work of Derrida ('supplementarity'), Eco (on interpretation), and Stanley Fish (on the role of interpretative communities). I have already briefly discussed the work of Edward Said (and Richard Poirier) in relation to the literary performance of identity (chapter one, **Definitions and Identities**). Here we may ask: how exactly is literary language marked out from the everyday? And in what sense(s) can a writer be said to perform a text? Is writing performative in the sense that speech is, or can be?

In this initial phase of the discussion I have argued that the materials for a theory of performance are continuous with perception itself. Given the wide range of applications of the term colloquially, and its fashionable status as a concept, the academic requirement of precision entails narrow technical definition. The tendency for local definitions to run adrift from each other is inevitable. Here I should stress once more that it is not necessarily important that the accounts I have given are objective, balanced and complete (were such a thing possible): my aim has been to demonstrate (a) a principle of diversification and fragmentation (and *not* to argue for a new central, all-encompassing definition) and (b) that the range of concepts involved in performance theories is fairly consistent and that they differ in their emphases. In fact, I will go further here, and reiterate the point that conceptual fuzziness, or ambiguity is a positive value: it allows innovation to proceed. The plethora of definitions that have arisen nonetheless invite clarification and in the next section I propose a distinction between two ontologies of performance which I see as fundamental to our understanding of music.

Resistance'.

Performance as Process; Performance as Product

As I hinted in chapter one (**Definitions and Identities**), the notion of performance has been enlisted by literary theorists. Edward Said uses it to argue against a brand of identity politics. Briefly, his point is that the literary act (or speech act?) of labelling and defining tends to result in individual and ethnic identities congealing and reifying: the pose held becomes a stance, both for the observer and the observed. The stance entraps. However, none of this invalidates the need for naming. In this sense, Said's position is open to criticism. Put simply, we can say that words themselves are reifications of meaning: for a word to carry meaning, it must be able to signify a range of particular cases (proper names excepted). For all its ambiguities, our conceptual world requires a degree of consensus about meanings in order to function, which is to reiterate the point that concepts are not infinitely permeable. This consensus must attain a modicum of stability within a world of human dimensions, across time (measured in generations) and space, that is to say within a language community which acknowledges the authority of relevant institutions, such as publishers, broadcasters, or lawyers. (At this level I would invoke the concept of the practice.) At a higher level, the text itself – and its minimal unit of utterance (usually sentence) – must be storable: it must have some kind of physical existence, usually until now as manuscript or print, but increasingly in a virtual electronic format. Any literary concept of performance must acknowledge, and find a place for, conceptual and textual levels of reification. The literary conception of performance is to this extent always a stable *product*.

Let me contrast this with a performance theorist's ontology of performance. Peggy Phelan's words will speak eloquently for themselves:

> Performance's only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations *of* representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance. To the degree that performance

> attempts to enter the economy of reproduction it betrays and lessens the promise of its own ontology. Performance's being [i.e. its ontological status]... becomes itself through disappearance.[43]

It is clear that Phelan's radical ontology of ephemerality is, like Said's parallel commitment to identity-in-flux, politically motivated. Where Said rails against negative stereotyping, Phelan has the capitalist economy of reproduction in her sights:

> Performance in a strict ontological sense is nonreproductive. It is this quality which makes performance the runt of the litter of contemporary art. Performance clogs the smooth machinery of reproductive representation necessary to the circulation of capital.[44]

While the performance art she documents and discusses sometimes makes use of language, it claims to bypass the levels of reification literature must embrace.

Phelan's ontology, then, should be read against the background of performance art, its aims and strategies: among others, to tie itself to the visual and the speechless. 'Speechlessness' is something it importantly shares with live instrumental music and her point that performance 'becomes itself though disappearance' – that performance is process – is well taken in both contexts. She is ready to embrace the consequences to the full. So she usefully points to the performative nature of reception: in a gallery every individual sees something different and nobody ever sees quite the same thing twice. As she puts it:

> … the interaction between the art object and the spectator is, essentially, performative – and therefore resistant to the claims of validity and accuracy endemic to the discourse of reproduction.[45]

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[43] Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: the Politics of Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993), p.146. The title of the chapter this and the following references are taken from is 'The ontology of performance: representation without reproduction' p.146-166.
[44] Phelan, *Unmarked*, p.148.
[45] Ibid, p.147.

Reception is, in short, a performative process. Furthermore,

> Without a copy, live performance plunges into invisibility – in a maniacally charged present – and disappears into memory, into the realm of invisibility and the unconscious... [46]

What does this line of reasoning ultimately imply? Well, it ends up denying the possibility of any form of artistic evaluation – 'You had to be there', the critic says with a shrug – unless, that is, the documentation of the event – prior, as notation, or subsequent, as criticism – is to play a significant role in the experience of performance art. Phelan's claim is that while speech is performative, writing is 'constative' (descriptive) and, as such, shorn of evasive powers and open to commodification: it becomes a potential participant in the economy of reproduction.[47] The problem here is that *any* act of communication requires a stable code. If members of an audience at a performance art event, or of a community of readers, want to compare interpretations, their only intelligible access to their respective experiences – stored in their memories – is through language, a stored system of rules (syntax) and representations (semantics).[48]

I would like to hint at a further caveat to Phelan's ontology voiced by the performance theorist Philip Auslander. Phelan claimed in her quotation above that performance 'disappears into memory, into the realm of invisibility and the unconscious...'.The sentence continues '...where it eludes regulation and control.' Following a detailed consideration of the interactions of media (especially mass media, such as television) and live events, Auslander concludes quite the opposite: that 'in order to escape regulation and the economy of

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[46] Ibid, p.148.

[47] Her discussion of this problem and the 'challenge' it poses threatens to issue in absurdity. She talks of 'writing towards disappearance, rather than the act of writing towards preservation' invoking the work of Barthes. (Phelan, *Unmarked*, p.148.) But if one is truly writing towards disappearance, why write at all? The point of writing is that it conserves.

[48] In this context I might mention John Frow's comments on the nature of memory in his essay 'Toute la mémoire du monde: Repetition and Forgetting', in his *Time and Commodity Culture: Essays in Cultural Theory and Postmodernity* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), p.218-246, (p.234). He argues that what is memorised is not a fixed text; recalling memories is an act of reconstruction, vulnerable to distortion and fragile. Recall is subject to moment-to-moment

reproduction, performance must not only disappear, it must be excluded from memory'.[49]

What Said's and Phelan's contrasting ontologies make plain is that all performance has both an element of reproduction – of a stored product – and uniqueness – of a process in real time. (We should remind ourselves that the distinction between object, event and process is 'soft'.) Either element can be severely attenuated, but it cannot quite disappear. The distinction I wish to make at this point is designed to aid our thinking about music. We need to separate out theories which talk of a performance as a finished product from processual theories. Literature, for example, is written and read at *different times and places* by audiences of individuals *also separate in time and space*. The text which links these separate occasions is a form of storage, a product; on the other hand, its writing and reading can be viewed as *processual* performances of the text, where the author or the reader acts simultaneously as both performer and audience. Critical writing about art is performative in this sense. Phelan's critical accounts of performance art are themselves literary (reified) performances, but their value is inseparable from their reproducibility. The fact is – and Phelan is aware of this – that although they do indeed preserve subjective experience, they always do so imperfectly, because each (re)reading is a new performance.[50]

So *reified* performances maintain their identity across time and space. They are documents, or forms of storage. *Processual* performance must always take place in a unified field of time and place, in which there is immediate sensory feedback for the performer. A reified performance is, within the conceptual scheme I propose, a potential 'text' of a future processual performance. In my subsequent employment of 'performance' as a term of art, I will have in mind the processual rather than the reified, unless expressly stated to the contrary.

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interference. In this sense, then, memory is performative.

[49] Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (London: Routledge, 1999), p.156.

[50] Phelan, *Unmarked*: 'The attempt to write about the undocumentable event of performance is

This further exploration of the concept of performance has confirmed the fact that the term is not, in any simple sense. a unified concept: it has generated many different definitions. The themes that recur include *ritual*. *frame*. *role*. and *text/context*. In discussions of performance we should expect to encounter notions of *difference*, *uniqueness, change, authenticity, commitment* and *identity* in various guises. And ideas about *play, experimentation, skill,* and *display* will resurface from time to time.

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to invoke the rules of the written document and thereby alter the event itself.' (p.148)

Narrowing the Focus: Theories and Descriptions of Musical Performance

In this section I would like to contrast two further approaches to performance, connected in turn with the philosophy of art/analytical aesthetics and popular music/cultural studies. The same disclaimer applies as above: this is not a systematic overview, but a set of commentaries and case studies which frame the question of what performance is more closely. More specifically, the contrast here concerns the relative scope of each endeavour. So my first approach – the aesthetic – is systematic. It examines fine detail, using the tools of logic. The focus is narrowed to the familiar 'high art' concert performance situation, which is treated as a social given.

1. Analytical aesthetics: Within this field, performance has often been defined as an adjunct of the 'work' and its 'interpretation', or within a larger debate concerning the ontology of artworks, their relative status, and how they are perceived and enjoyed.[51] The type-token distinction, originally taken from Peirce, and popularised by Richard Wollheim, has also found employment here.[52] An important discussion of the issue of the ontology of musical works is contained in Lydia Goehr's *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*, in which she argues against a 'timeless' Platonic conception proposed by Kivy, Levinson and others, viewing the work concept as a product rooted in (recent) music history. Since her work was published, there has been a discernible rise in

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[51] This section includes discussions of aesthetic theories which are not strictly classifiable as 'analytical'. Important contributions to this field – many of which have appeared in journals rather than book form have been made by (among others) Jerrold Levinson, Peter Kivy, Arthur Danto, Stephen Davies, George Dickie, R. A. Sharpe and Kingsley Price. An excellent reference source is the bibliography of Lydia Goehr's *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: an Essay in the Philosophy of Music* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992).

[52] Richard Wollheim points out the link to C. S. Peirce in *Art and Its Objects* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), p.178.

interest in the concept of performance, with two book-length studies appearing recently, by Peter Kivy and Stan Godlovitch.[53]

It is characteristic of the genre that its product is ever finer conceptual differentiation. This is the case in Kivy's study, which proceeds by examining, comparing and rejecting arguments in turn. (This can, in less able hands, make for dense reading: Kivy is among the most stylistically felicitous in this field). He approaches the topic of performance obliquely, through his analysis of 'authenticities' and the concept of performance as such is never the object of direct philosophical scrutiny. What he has to say on the nature of performance in passing nicely exemplifies what we might see now as a dilemma: how can we talk about the process of performance without turning it into a product? Here is how he sets about his analysis, which I will quote in full:

> 1. There has to be some viable distinction between the performance (object) and what it is a performance of: that is to say, there must be a performance and some at least vaguely autonomous, identifiable entity that 'survives' performance and endures through time – what has, since the modern era, been called the 'work'.
> 2. The performance (object) is a work of art itself, an arrangement or version of the musical work that has been performed, and, as such, a subject of the kind of evaluation and aesthetic satisfaction that artworks support and provide.
> 3. The performer is an artist, somewhat akin to a composer or, better, 'arranger' of musical works.[54]

Some of the points Kivy makes here are familiar enough. Busoni, for example, had already in 1910 claimed that a performance is a transcription.[55]

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[53] Peter Kivy, *Authenticities: Philosophical Reflections on Musical Performance* (Ithaca: Cornell, 1995). I have already referred to Godlovitch's work – specifically to his definition of performance – in chapter one. Stan Godlovitch, *Musical Performance: a Philosophical Study* (London: Routledge, 1998).

[54] Kivy, *Authenticities,* p.261.

[55] Ferruccio Busoni, 'Value of the Transcription', *The Essence of Music*, trans. Rosamond Ley (New York: Dover, 1965), p.85-89. Within a discussion in defence of transcription he has this to say: 'The performance of a work is also a transcription, and this too – however free the performance may be – can never do away with the original. For the musical work of art exists whole and intact before it has sounded and after the sound is finished.
It is, at the same time, in and outside of Time.' (p.88) Like Kivy, Busoni is clearly putting forward a 'Platonic' theory of the musical work as ideal form.

The 'consciousness of doubleness', in the form of work/performance is central to the argument. However flattering it may be to the performer to be an artist 'somewhat akin' to a composer – and one of the aims of Kivy's study is to give the performer her proper due – I find it difficult to accept that a musical performance is an arrangement (with or without scare quotes). Arrangement conjures up the semantic components of structured organisation and planned predictability: and I realise that Kivy's argument is precisely that performance is *not* a mechanical, predictable matter; nonetheless the practising musician is likely to think immediately of arrangements in relation to 'hard' versions of a piece, made up for a purpose, such as transcriptions or reductions. The performance is, in Kivy's definition, neither/both an object, (n)or its absence. And he is as uncomfortable with this ambiguity as his punctuation will suggest. The claim that there are two works of art rather than one, where a fine performance is involved, is, I think unsustainable without further elaboration: where, we are entitled to ask, is this second artwork? In Kivy's formulation the answer is nowhere. And are recordings also to count as artworks, making a possible third category? Is there not a useful distinction to be made between the notated work, the performer's interpretation *and* the particular performance?

Godlovitch tackles performance head-on. Instead of differentiating between kinds, however, he narrows the focus in what I think is ultimately a self-defeating way, producing a thirteen point definition of 'necessary conditions' (on whose 'joint sufficiency' he is uncommitted) of the live art music concert/recital.[56] In the end, this gives an impression of thoroughness, rather than substance. It must be said that the Anglo-American school of analytical aesthetics rarely offers an identifiable philosophy of history, or indeed any formal analysis of social, cultural or historical contexts, a shortcoming exposed above all by Goehr's analysis in *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*.[57] But Godlovitch's perspective does seem unduly one-sided: his study of

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[56] I quoted Godlovitch's definition in chapter one above (**A Philosophical Parenthesis: Godlovitch's Performance Model**).

[57] Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*. See above chapter 1, footnote 72, where I quote Max Paddison's critique of Kivy's *Authenticities* in *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 36 (1996), 330-332. Paddison also makes this comment: 'What becomes apparent [on reading his book] is the absence of any real philosophy of history within Kivy's toolkit which can

musical performance is so heavily weighed towards the systematic that almost no sense of historically motivated cause emerges. In other words. he has next to nothing to say about *why* the performance of (art) music occurs the way it does within our culture. This narrowness also leaves the impression that the large swathes of our culture (and the academic world) which also avail themselves of the term are talking of something quite unrelated. (Establishing a closer sense of kinship between the different senses in which the term 'performance' is used is one of the aims here.) Circularity is inevitable at some level in defining terms, but here there is no attempt at a broader cultural hermeneutics: the horizon is suffocatingly close. Any attempt to relate musical performance to, say, the theatre, falls at the first hurdle: performance, his definition claims, is 'a datable sound sequence (that is, a sonic event)' involving 'the immediate output of some musical instrument'.[58] Visual elements play no part in his definition, which mentions 'listeners', rather than 'audience' (or, for that matter, 'spectators').

Certainly his definition does capture something important that has eluded others. For example, he unravels a peculiar but significant difference between performing and operating a piece of technology. After all, a piano is as much a piece of technology as a CD player. The distinction here rests on the speed, continuity and extent of differentiation of feedback between the performer and his ability (and commitment) to adapt the performance to the immediate conditions; to acknowledge, and make positive use of, a performance's necessary uniqueness. (I mentioned Andras Schiff's description of this as doing running repairs.[59]) Simon Frith proposes a distinction between 'productive' and 'reproductive' instruments to account for the difference

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adequately account for the predicament of performance practice in the twentieth century.' (p.332)

[58] Godlovitch, *Musical Performance,* p.49.

[59] See footnote 38 above.

Godlovitch describes.[60] He has much else to say about skill. as well as the social organisations which allow its acquisition.[61]

In conclusion, I would say that while Godlovitch is more interested in establishing logical consistency in the description of a narrowly conceived class of events, he is lamed by his own lack of ambition, because the resulting analysis has so little cultural resonance. It merely maintains, in the manner of a lawyer arguing a precedent, that what emerges logically is true.

Music aesthetics in Europe has a distinguished history – and a rather longer one – as well as a quite different sense of that history's import within 'systematic' discussion. For that reason, I will for the present restrict my comments on the work of Adorno and Dahlhaus to a single observation: for both, the history of music is primarily the history of musical works and their performances are contingent upon this. This is very much the conventional 'mainstream' view (discussed in more detail below). The work of the European (Polish) philosopher Roman Ingarden is somewhat difficult to place. As a critic of German Idealist thought, he was drawn to an alternative approach to ontology, generally termed 'phenomenological'. His work is 'analytical' in a rather different sense from the Anglo-American philosophers discussed above: it enumerates and examines sense impressions, rather than analysing concepts. In contrast to Godlovitch's over-particularity, Ingardens's findings are intended to be generalisable across the domain of the arts (and beyond).[62] His conclusions concern the existence and nature of stratification and schematisation (whereby literature differs in significant ways from music). Briefly, he views a musical work as both an 'intentional object' created out of the beliefs and desires of the composer, a 'schematic object' containing aesthetically significant gaps of indeterminacy and a 'social object', a part of a society's environment.[63]

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[60] Simon Frith discusses the relationship between technology and instrument in *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), chapter 11. Frith points to the historically important role of the player piano as a mid point between these categories. (p.233). For further details, see footnote 70 below.

[61] Godlovitch, *Musical Performance,* ch.2.

[62] See Roman Ingarden, *Der Streit um die Existenz der Welt*, vols. 1-3 (Tübingen: Niemeyer 1964, 1965, 1974).

[63] Roman Ingarden, *The Work of Music and the Problem of its Identity*, trans. Adam Czerniawski, ed. Jean G. Harrell (London: Macmillan, 1986). This edition contains a brief essay on Ingarden's work and its position within twentieth century European philosophy by Max

The first chapter of *The Work of Music and the Problem of its Identity* deals with performance, which Ingarden defines as follows:

> Each performance of a certain musical work is a certain individual occurrence (process) developing in time and placed in it univocally [...] As a process, every specific performance of a musical work can take place only once.[64]

To this he adds that performance is 'univocally fixed in space' and that it can only be heard once from a particular position: in other words, each listener`s experience is genuinely, uniquely subjective and in this sense irrecoverable. In other words, like Peggy Phelan, Ingarden takes the ephemerality of performance seriously. He hints too at the role 'aesthetic attitude' plays (how we feel, how well we concentrate) in what he calls the 'concretion' of a work's performance. The concretion is the unique subjective identity which emerges as the work-as-schematic-object is 'filled in' or 'realised'. We might, incidentally, think of the attitude of the listener as a further framing device (for frames need not be physical barriers). What is available to the musician-reader or listener outside of the performance event itself is mere schematic representation (as notation, for example).

An omission at this stage – and here I would refer back to my comments on Kivy above – is Ingarden's failure to locate and name that form the work takes while it is in mental storage: what I would call the 'interpretation'. Interpretation in this sense is another form of more or less stable storage for the work, comparable in this sense to written notation. As notation underdetermines performance, there is space for it to be partly determined by traditions of interpretation. Ingarden seems bent on making a contrary point:

> The work remains insensible to the processes occurring in the contents and in the manner of experiencing auditory aspects of particular performances: it does not change as a

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Rieser (p.159-173).

[64] Ingarden, *The Work of Music,* p.10. Further to this, he points to the uniqueness of every 'performance' (in the sense of 'playing') of a recording: each time we hear a recording, we hear it in a different strip of sound, so there is no exact, true repetition.

> result of the performances, acquiring this or that characteristic… [65]

Thus he makes a radical separation between the 'schematic object' and the socially grounded interpretations it receives: and this is arguably justifiable in an investigation into ontology. His later discussion of the work's identity in 'historical time' revolves around the notion of an ideal or perfect performance, which he concludes is illusory. Rather, he claims, there is no 'original', of which performances are copies or derivatives, but only various 'concretions', whose character will change from epoch to epoch, in a process of continuous discovery.[66] As far as interpretation is concerned, he does not speculate at length on the structural similarities between interpretations over time, or the mechanisms that lead to them (though he does mention the changes in taste in performances of Chopin over the last century).[67] Research by music psychologists on the structural characteristics of interpretation and by scholars of recorded music on the patterns of change they have undergone has clarified the picture here. (Ingarden was writing at a time when such research had not yet been undertaken).

2. Popular Music/Cultural Studies. There could hardly be a greater contrast between the microcosms of analytic pedantry described above and the vaulting ambition of cultural studies. Simon Frith's recent book *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music*[68] is typical of work in its field in that it casts the net very widely: indeed, it aims to take in the whole culture. The basic approach is sociological, with an initial division of 'high' and 'low' cutting across all domains, and a further subdivision of music into three 'overlapping and contradictory grids' labelled 'art', 'folk' and 'pop'. Later Frith extends this organisation to cover the technological aspect of musical (re)production in a

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[65] Ibid, p.18-19.
[66] Ibid, chapter 8, especially p.154-8.
[67] Ibid , p.144-5.
[68] I have ignored the work of Frith (and others working in the field of cultural studies and popular music) in my discussion of the practice above partly for reasons of space and partly because of Frith's strong sociological slant. However, there is some overlap in the ground covered. For example, his excellent summary and assessment of Kingsbury's work on the

provocative way. Although there is some risk in doing so – Frith's study attempts a rather grand synthesis – let us cut to the chase and consider his views on performance in isolation.[69]

At the start of the chapter of his book entitled 'Performance', Frith makes it clear that he is prepared to take a broad view of the topic, including, for example, listening-as-performance:

> My argument in this book is not just that in listening to popular music we are listening to a performance, but, further, that 'listening' itself is a performance: to understand how musical pleasure, meaning, and evaluation work, we have to understand how, as listeners, we perform the music for ourselves.[70]

A question to bear in mind here is: if listening is a performance, what exactly is it a performance *of*? (What Frith seems to have in mind is the performance of a role – the 'fan' – which implies 'typical' ways of listening.) Later he points to the increasing importance of performance in everyday life, mentioning such causal factors as urbanisation and the loss of intimacy (dealing with people we don't know), and a raft of effects connected with industrial capitalism.[71]

A question arises, then, how Frith is to distinguish between what counts as a performance and what is outside of it. This, remember, was much at issue in

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conservatory is relevant here. *Performing Rites,* p.37-8.

[69] Many would question the division of culture into high and low (or mass/elite): John Frow has argued that it is no longer applicable in his *Cultural Studies and Cultural Value* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995). But Frith's argument isn't quite as banal as I make it sound. He says that '...we should begin from the principle that there is no difference between high and low culture, and then see how, nevertheless, such a difference has become a social fact...' (*Performing Rites,* p.19.) The art/folk/pop distinction structures the book and is first presented on p.26. The link to different technologies is in the chapter entitled 'Technology and Authority' (see esp. p.227). Here he argues that there are three 'cultures' of music organised according to the degree of sophistication with which they use technology in producing sound. 'Folk' music is a technologically naïve stage, in which music is stored in the mind/body and is restored in performance. 'Art' music represents a second stage, in which music comes to be stored in (handwritten, printed) notation, against which performances can subsequently be judged. And in a final stage, 'Pop' music can be stored mechanically or electronically and reproduced away from the point of creation, thus potentially breaking up the unified time-space field of processual performance. There is no denying the historical time sequence here, but Frith does not have in mind a progression of value (i.e. more sophisticated technology does not equal better music in his scheme).

[70] Frith, *Performing Rites*, p.203-4.

[71] Ibid, p.206.

the comments I cited on sociological theories of performance above. Frith's general orientation is indeed resolutely sociological: what he is interested in is 'performance as an experience [...] of *sociability*'.[72] More formally expressed, '..."performance" defines a social – or communicative – process. It requires an audience and is dependent, in this sense, on interpretation; it is about meanings.'[73] Incidentally, note his claim here that performance is a *process*. The extraordinary interpenetration of product into process in popular music performance (often referred to as 'mediatisation'), where the two can barely be told apart, makes it doubly important that we hold him to this.[74]

The second point to make concerns his attitude towards the *content* of performance. He claims to be 'less interested in theories of text than of context',[75] by which I take him to mean that his orientation is reception-weighted: the primary question is how listeners make sense of popular music (and the value it has for them), as opposed to how the performer *interprets* a prior representation (such as musical notation). '[B]efore trying to make sense of performance as a way of working with a text,' he says, 'we should first be sure we understand how performance is different, how it is "non-textual".'[76] This in turn raises other questions: what (or where) exactly is the 'text' in a performance? Is there unanimity (and how much) between performer and audience as to what the point (content, text...) of a performance is? Do we share assumptions about what I as a performer intend to perform and what you as an audience (member) wish to experience?

One way of delimiting content is through framing and Frith's comments will strike a familiar chord:

> ... popular performance concerns 'framing'. Performance may only make sense through the everyday, but 'public performance' also describes something marked off from the everyday.[77]

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[72] Ibid, p.204. This is made clear from the very start of the book. See especially chapters 1-2.
[73] Ibid, p.205.
[74] The term 'mediatisation' was invented by Jean Baudrillard. See *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, trans. Charles Levin (St. Louis: Telos Press, 1981).
[75] Frith, *Performing Rites*, p.204.
[76] Frith, *Performing Rites*, p.204.
[77] Ibid, p.207.

How this marking off takes place is problematic and some of his best commentary examines the ambiguities and ironic possibilities which arise, and how 'play' and spontaneous improvisation fit into this. (These were prominent themes in my commentary on anthropological notions of performance.) He further points to the role that genre rules play in this public framing.[78]

> One of the reasons why the question of 'text' is so complicated is that in popular music the overwhelming majority of the music is itself texted (i.e. it has lyrics). So Frith spends much time examining 'role' and the nature of the various possible identifications – between singer and song, listener and song, listener and singer – that emerge, commenting that '*all* live performance involves both spontaneous action and the playing of a role'.[79] What I take Frith to be doing here is taking the matrix of the performance situation in toto and extracting a different 'text' as central to his analysis: text here is not notation-realised-in-sound, but rather the whole range of codes which in sociological or dramatic terms constitute roles, including scripted lyrics, dance, gesture, props and attire. (The sociologist has an interest in seeking out gaps of the hitherto indeterminate and proposing meanings for them within a performance.) The 'communicative process' is the simultaneous decoding of this multi-layered, multi-media performance event. Listening is performative in the sense that each individual will extract different meanings from (or construct different meanings out of) this complex whole. The 'sounding' text is embedded in a complex mix of activities. So it is, all in all, not all that surprising that Frith has next to nothing to say about those technical aspects of music-making which are normally of paramount concern to the classical music performer.

Up to this point I have tried to limit myself to an exposition of Frith's theory. It must be clear by now that a simplistic application in the domain of art music would be problematic. Consider the functions of *text, role, communication* and *interpretation* in Frith's conceptual scheme. Mainstream musicologists tend to identify the music to a great extent with notation: notation is their primary 'text'. There have been successful textual analyses of popular

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[78] Ibid, p.207.
[79] Ibid, p.207.

music, to be sure. But what is available is usually little more than a thin schema, or prototype; and the notion of authorship and the concomitant claim that the text encodes a valuable individual authorial subjectivity is misplaced.[80] Hence Frith's orientation towards 'context', or rather, as I claimed above, the multiple coded texts which constitute role. If the notated musical work is central to art music performance, the possibilities of role analysis are considerably reduced, as there are no lyrics in instrumental music, no discrete role which the performer is overtly acting out. They are not extinguished entirely, however: the performer utilises gestural and dress codes which have identifiable, if somewhat opaque (or faint) social meanings. And the nineteenth-century notion of *Kunstreligion* points to an obvious situational model (containing roles such as the musician-as-priest, the audience-as-congregation, the concert-as-holy-communion).[81]

Frith's use of the concepts of interpretation and communication raise large questions which certainly go beyond the scope of this commentary. I will merely try to hint at some of the difficulties. We become aware of a need for clearer differentiation between performance and interpretation when, in an over-zealous attempt to extend the range of his performance label, he comments that

> Just as a singer is both performing the song and performing the performance of the song, so we, as an audience, are listening both to the song and to its performance.[82]

Here, a failure to pursue the ontological implications of performance-as-process produces a verbal contortion. For surely what Frith means is that the singer is both performing the song and its *interpretation*? Or that the performance is of an interpretation of a prior recording? However much Frith may want to leave aside the notion of text-as-musical-work, he cannot do without it completely.

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[80] For a description of the popular music text as 'schema', see Peter Van Der Merwe, *Origins of the Popular Style: The Antecedents of Twentieth Century Popular Music* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), chapter 10. Nicholas Cook draws attention to the limitations of an 'authorial' approach to the analysis of rock music in 'Music minus One: Rock, Theory and Performance', in *new formations: a Journal of Culture/Theory/Politics*, 27 (Winter 1995-6), volume title 'Performance Matters', p.23-41.

[81] For further discussion, see Carl Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, trans. Roger Lustig (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989). Christopher Small and Henry Kingsbury have each analysed the concert situation in this way.

[82] Frith, *Performing Rites*, p.211.

The interpretation in this sense would be the mental reification of the performer's intentions, the 'game plan' performers follow and which in performance never comes out quite the same way twice. If we accept Frith's comment here, we conflate the two sense of performance I distinguished between above, namely the reified and the processual.[83]

This brings me to communication. Semiotic codes may aspire to the status of natural language, but they do not achieve it. Communication is not an unambiguous concept, and not all forms of communication are equally flexible or successful as the semiotician Peirce's well-known distinction between Icon, Index and Symbol makes clear. Frith makes an important point about the role of convention in popular music performance, when he says that '... the performance artist depends on an audience which can interpret her work *through its own experience of performance*...'. (And later, 'a performance is always... a performance in a history of performances...'.[84]) There is much which is entertaining and insightful in Frith's musings on role-playing and the construction of identities and how the audience colludes in this. For performances to work, audiences need expectations, and a central task for a performance theory of music must be to describe this 'generic contract'. In other words, there must be a *consciousness* of doubleness.[85] But we are really none the wiser after reading his account of how or what the *music* communicates. Indeed, is communication really the concept we need here?

Are these lapses – if lapses they are – crucial? Perhaps they are best seen as the consequence of Frith's choice of literary genre here. Cultural studies writing rejects the high academic mode of close, formal reasoning. It aims for accessibility and Frith's style is a poeticised journalese modelled on 'direct'

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[83] Frith is evidently aware of the problem here. He quotes Richard Bauman as saying that performance is an 'emergent structure' that comes into being only as it is performed. (*Performing Rites,* p.208.) He adds in a footnote (p.327) that 'it may be true... that books too only come into being when read, but they can and are studied as if they were always already structured, so to speak.' Here the problem word becomes 'structure' and its status as what is performed.

[84] Frith, *Performing Rites,* p.205. Italics in the original. Second quotation from p.211.

[85] Frith revealingly quotes Arthur Danto at one point: 'To see something as art requires something the eye cannot decry – an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art: an artworld', adding that this is 'the guiding principle of the sociology of culture too'. (*Performing Rites,* p.249.)

speech, a chatty informality which mixes serious academic pondering on 'hard' issues with personal disclosure (which one may find disarming or uncomfortable). The book is 'framed' by two performance 'occasions', an old friends' get-together and alone in a hotel room in Berlin, watching pop videos. This self-conscious device – along with the trite stab at closure ("'La Bamba,' I think restlessly, this is where I came in'[86]) and the relentlessly colloquial tone – make us aware (intentionally, I think) of the book itself as a constructed, reified performance.

Performance Studies in Musicology: (1) Orthodoxy

We have seen how, in the post World War Two years, social scientists of various persuasions appropriated the concept of performance from the theatre and turned it to their own explanatory ends. At the same time, an avant-garde-inspired art form – performance art – explored an 'anti-ontology' of process (often harnessed to a radical political agenda). A substantial body of theoretical writing accumulated and the concept of performance acquired a new colloquial chic. While much of this writing is not overtly concerned with music, I have examined two areas of theorising which take it on specifically: analytical aesthetics concerns itself primarily with consistency of linguistic use; and cultural studies attempts a sociologically inspired 'top-down' analysis of culture at large and music's – particularly popular music's – place within a scheme.

To an academic versed in Performance Theory and familiar with these developments, the nascent sub-discipline of 'performance studies' in musicology must present a bewildering picture. Surprisingly little of what I have described here has to date left any recognisable imprint on mainstream musicology. I hinted above at an orthodox view of performance in music theory and in order to make sense of 'performance studies', it would be useful to know something of how this orthodoxy arose.

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[86] This is the final sentence of *Performing Rites*.

I claimed above that for Adorno and his pupil Dahlhaus the history of music is primarily the history of musical works. Dahlhaus's argument – which I will examine first here – is presented at length in the chapter entitled 'Thoughts on Structural History' in *Foundations of Music History*.[87] The question Dahlhaus is ostensibly addressing here concerns the nature and content of music history: how are structures (or 'circumstances'), events, musical genres and individual works to be accommodated? He argues that the rise of aesthetics in the mid eighteenth century paralleled the emergence of the work concept and that, as a result, music came to be viewed '... as the creation of forms rather than actions within a social environment'. Hence, 'the fundamental category [of music history] is not the "event" but the "work"'. 'A Work', he says, '...represents... the concrete realisation of an idea in the mind of an individual'. Its meaning 'resides in its aesthetic essence', which amounts to a claim that its significance is not tied to a particular locus in history.[88]

It is instructive to look briefly at Dahlhaus's range of terms for conceptualising history. Implicit in his analysis is a hierarchy. At the bottom is what he calls the 'teeming mass of process' with which all historians, regardless of whether their ambitions are explicative or narrative, are faced.[89] Processes consist of movements, which in turn coalesce into actions, with events (usually) consisting in turn of bundles of actions. Structures are the patternings, broadly visible at a distance, that emerge when sufficient numbers of actions are organised in terms of cause and effect. Note here the complex relationship that brings events into being: an event occurs at 'a point at which actions and structures intersect'. In other words, events occupy a privileged position within a chain of historical causes and effects. Events have often been the stuff of political (and specifically military) history. 'Their significance', he comments, 'lies less in themselves than in their consequences (there is no such thing as a political "event" without consequences'.)[90] So the problem falls into two halves:

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[87] Carl Dahlhaus, *Foundations of Music History*, trans. J. B. Robinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p.129-149.
[88] Dahlhaus, *Foundations,* p.132.
[89] Ibid, p.117.
[90] Ibid, p.133. The problem of distinguishing movements, actions and events from each other is about finding the point at which intentions enter the picture. It is mirrored at the level of

first, there is the question of which concepts to use to carve up history into manageable 'units' (and here Dahlhaus employs a conventional hierarchy); and second, how to fit human intention into the historical frame. He achieves this by distinguishing between events entailing causes and effects, and their prior constitutive actions. Ultimately, the structural and the historical are mutually implicated and inextricable, he argues, and the term 'structural history' is a conscious acknowledgement of the need to mediate between these two domains.[91]

Musical performances are possible candidates for eventhood within this scheme, and, indeed, examples spring readily to mind (Mendelssohn's revival of the Matthew Passion, the premiere of *Le Sacre du Printemps*). But to conceive of music history in terms of performance events is, Dahlhaus avers, impossible:

> … no-one has ever so much as tried to write music history as a history of events, even though music historians almost invariably describe individual events and, in a few instances, actually analyse them. On the contrary, texts as abstracted from acoustical realisations and social surroundings, the institutions that serve as vehicles of musical events, and the categories of music reception – it is these, and not events, which go to make up the corpus of facts that music historians draw upon… [92]

The problem, as he describes it, is that in order to talk about processual musical performance, it has to be reified into a 'text', or product of some kind. Dahlhaus acknowledges that the reality of music is musical events, ('acoustical occurrences taking place within social contexts'). However, historically speaking, performances-in-themselves must remain inaudible and invisible. Within the history of music, then, works provide an ultimate raison d'être. And at the risk of appearing over-reductive, I am, I think, right in drawing a parallel between the problem in theorising history that Dahlhaus describes here and that facing the ontologist of performance: how to render process into product.

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performance as the pedagogical distinction between neutral technique and intentional interpretation. Deciding what constitutes an event is as problematic as deciding what constitutes interpretation.

[91] Ibid, p.137.

Adorno's view's on music history and the role of performance within it are easily accessible in Max Paddison's exemplary account and so I will limit myself to a few summarising comments.[93] Firstly, Adorno, like Dahlhaus, regards the Work as the primary vehicle of music history. Paddison summarises his view: '[A]lthough the work as performance is more than the work as printed score, Adorno insists that the work as transcendental "thing-in-itself" is more than both.'[94] The performance is contingent upon the work and the relationship between performer and work is in essence a *craft* relationship, where the interpreter attempts to solve the problems the work poses.[95] It is nonetheless problematic: on Adorno's view, musical artworks contain inherently contradictory elements – antinomies – which make satisfactory performance well-nigh impossible. Adorno uses the concept 'tour de force' to describe the performer's grappling with the (incompatible) demands the work makes.[96] Indeed, the performer, in spite of her rational, problem-solving pretensions, is 'the last refuge of irrational reproduction within the capitalist process'.[97]

Adorno's views can often seem paradoxical, even dangerously close to self-contradiction. This is true too of his comments on the processual aspect of performance, whose significance he is keen to downplay as far as possible. The reason he gives is that work is a fully formed 'congealed object'. Paddison quotes Adorno as saying that 'all "becoming" in music is in fact illusory, insofar as the music, as *text,* is really fixed and thus is not actually 'becoming' anything as it is already there.'[98] But this begs important questions: how does the interpreter/performer actually discover form? How does analysis fit in? Adorno himself may have fought shy of addressing this problem in detail – he left few detailed analyses of works[99] – or he may have lacked a certain professional

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[92] Ibid, p.133.

[93] Max Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), especially chapter 5. It might seem odd to call Adorno a 'musicologist', given how much he contributed to other fields. However, his views fit into the discussion best at this point.

[94] Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics,* p.198.

[95] Ibid, p.196, where Paddison refers to the early (untranslated) essay 'Zur Problem der Reproduktion'.

[96] Ibid, p.197-8.

[97] Ibid: Adorno quoted by Paddison, p.194.

[98] Ibid, p.191.

[99] Paddison includes an extended analysis of Berg's Op.1 sonata based on Adorno. Ibid, p.158-168.

expertise. It is significant that his intention to develop a theory of 'reproduction' (planned with Rudolf Kolisch in 1935) never achieved fruition, though the German pianist and musicologist Jürgen Uhde had access to Adorno's (unpublished) notes on this topic while he was preparing a pedagogical work on piano interpretation and performance.[100] The question of formal articulation is really twofold: how to (a) locate it in the work and (b) project it in the public performance setting. In the end, it comes back to a question about the 'unit of process'; and in addition, it raises explicitly an issue which has obsessed music theorists interested in performance: what is the relationship between performance and analysis?

There is much else that could be said about Adorno's theory of performance. Perhaps it might more tellingly be described as a theory of 'reproduction', linking it explicitly to other forms of representation, such as recording. This is a matter I will return to in the next chapter. For the moment, however, we might conclude that although it may be impossible to write a history of performance as such, a history of attitudes towards performance – of which the origins of the early music revival and the issue of performance authenticity would be a part – and a history of representations of performance (the history of recordings, for example) are perfectly conceivable.

Performance Studies in Musicology: (2) Recent Developments

Three immediate criticisms of what I have called the orthodox view sketched above might be voiced at this point. Firstly, it is *disembodied*: the performance setting/occasion plays no role in theorising and the audience is reduced to unseeing, unfeeling 'mono-sensual' listeners. Where, too, is the performer? What are his responsibilities beyond realising the work? Secondly, it is *evasive*: the problems it throws up – of the relationship of interpretation to performance, performance preparation, the role of analysis, the issue of

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[100] Jürgen Uhde and Renate Wieland, *Denken und Spielen: Studien zu einer Theorie der musikalischen Darstellung* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1988).

embodying and 'translating' a text into music – are often glossed over, or at best cursorily addressed. And finally, it is *patronising*: the performer is not artist, but artisan, a craftsperson. Where is the space in such an account for performance artistry?

Are these criticisms being addressed and, if so, how? Certainly the mainstream view has been questioned more and more often recently and I have already examined some of the ways in which this has happened. The current state of 'performance studies' is, as Dunsby points out, one of fragmentation.[101] What he means to suggest by this is not the break up of a formerly integrated entity, nor even a first stage in a move towards a putative whole. It is something quite different, a fact about the interdisciplinary nature of the subject. A characteristic product of this state of affairs is a recently published collection of essays edited by John Rink entitled *The Practice of Performance: Studies in Musical Interpretation*. It provides a picture of a discipline acknowledging a diversity of approaches rather than searching for a focus.[102] Nonetheless, one can discern two emphases and a relationship between them. The first is centred on the psychology of music and its attempts through experiment and empirical study to attain a stabler epistemological base from which to analyse performance; and the second is an enduring interest, shared by music psychologists, in the relationship between analysis and performance.

The issue of definition which I have been addressing here is often neglected in this study (and this is a particular problem in the more speculative contributions). Even the title throws together two key terms in a manner which invites explanation: but on the various occasions when explicit definitions are given, such as at the outset of Janet Levy's essay, they lack rigour.[103] And what

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[101] Jonathan Dunsby, 'Acts of Recall', *Musical Times* (January 1997), p.12. See also my comments on Dunsby's work at the end of chapter one above.

[102] *The Practice of Performance: Studies in Musical Interpretation*, ed. John Rink (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

[103] Take, for example, Janet Levy's essay 'Beginning-Ending Ambiguity: Consequences of Performance Choices', in Rink, *The Practice of Performance*, p.150-169. Levy begins promisingly by pointing out that in colloquial use, the terms 'interpretation' and 'performance' are interchangeable. (This is, incidentally, nicely confirmed by the pianist Roy Howat quotes at the beginning of his article: see Rink, *The Practice of Performance*, p.3, footnote 2.) She goes on to state: 'Just as every performance is an interpretation, every interpretation is either a performance or, when written as analysis and criticism, construable as a set of "instructions" for a performance... ' (p.150) Though this is well-intended, it ultimately fails, I think, to make a

of the subject matter itself? The practice of using recordings of various kinds as prime evidence for performance analysis may well be the only sensible exit from an impasse; but generally speaking, contributors to this volume seem only dimly aware of the ontological problem I have repeatedly identified: that a reification of a performance is never identical with the performance it was derived from (but rather the subject of a further performative act in an recursive/regenerative cycle).

Since this collection was published, one of the contributors has gone on to develop a theory of performance whose ambition makes it worthy of closer analysis, and I turn to this now.

A Case Study: Cook on Analysing Performance and Performing Analysis

Nicholas Cook's larger project – which has involved a good many asides and parentheses – has been to explore the divergence between the rhetoric of music theory and the reality of musical practice. A consequence of this has been a growing interest in performance. In *Music, Imagination, and Culture* (published in 1990) performance only featured incidentally; but since then his writing has made ever more explicit reference to it, culminating in the recent article whose title forms the sub-heading above.[104]

Although the central arguments of *Music, Imagination, and Culture* do not revolve around performance, they have strong implications for it. As such, they are a useful starting point for investigating Cook's views. 'A musical culture is a tradition of imagining sounds as music', he says, continuing that, 'its basic identity lies in its mechanism for constituting sounds as intentional

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clear enough distinction between entailment, implication and identity: does a performance necessarily entail the existence of an interpretation, or is this optional? (And whose interpretation is it?). Or are they really just different words for the same thing? At the risk of labouring the point let me quote one more example. Edward T. Cone's article in the same collection provides a further example of terminological conflation/confusion: 'The same resources that lead to valid critical interpretation inform intelligent practical interpretation i.e. performance.' (Ibid, p.242)

[104] Nicholas Cook, 'Analysing Performance and Performing Analysis' in *Rethinking Music*, eds. Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist (Oxford: Oxford Univeristy Press, 1999), p.239-261.

objects, from the level of the single note to that of the complete work.'[105] The key idea, or 'mechanism', is that of *reification*: composers have to work with notation, which presupposes reifications of the sonic process into notatable 'objects' – starting with the single note, through the interval, phrase and so on up the scale – and hence the internal characteristics of the notational system play an important part in constituting the sounds the composer imagines as music. For example, the notion of pitch as a fixed, stable entity is implied by notation; and the notational system in all likelihood played a very significant part in creating an expectation in the musical culture that pitches should be stable. There is, in short, a (positive) creative tension between reified notated sound and sound-as-process and a mutual influence, or feedback between them. It can be argued that the listener reverses the process, or at least tries to: it is the extent and nature of the listener's failure that interests Cook here. How does performance fit in? Cook makes the point that reading – and here words and music offer a direct parallel – is in both instances a real-time process and to this extent a 'performance of meaning'. Imagining music is also a kind of 'inner performance' because however synoptic our view of a piece, to imagine its sounds entails imagining a process.[106] This as we have seen is a matter of reconstitution from reifications. A problem arises when people mistake the reification – which is an 'artifice of representation'[107] – for reality.

Cook does not pursue his arguments here from the performer's point of view, but we can imagine how he might. The performer is necessarily tied to producing a process as the end-point of her endeavours. On the way to doing so, however, mediating reifications and performative processes are constantly interleaved, as the notation is first read (performatively), understood, interpreted and stored as reifications, and recalled both mentally and physically as processual performance. An interesting question to ask would be whether the constraints on composers Cook identifies are equally true of performers.

In his later work, Cook does not pursue this line of speculation. Instead, he emphasises a different aspect of the topic, approaching it from a rather

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[105] Nicholas Cook, *Music, Imagination, and Culture*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), p.223.
[106] Cook, *Music, Imagination, and Culture*, p.125-6.
[107] Ibid, p.225.

unexpected angle.[108] Instead of examining musical performance 'for its own sake', he applies a notion of performance to music theory in general, and analysis in particular, preparing the ground by pointing out that contemporary music theory is dominated by structuralist approaches. Typically, he says, the aim of analysis has been to define structure in musical works. (A structure is, of course, a reification.) Performance practice has tended to be judged by analysts on the basis of whether a/the structure is audible in a performance, an authoritarian approach he feels we should distance ourselves from. He goes on to make his claim that theory in general, and analysis in particular, reveals more of its true nature when seen as a performative act:

> My central proposition is that a theory which does justice to performance will be at the same time a theory aware of its own performative qualities… [W]e need to think about what our theory *does* as much as about what it *represents*.[109]

This contrast needs clarification. The 'representational' aspect of a theory is its content by another name: the theorist's striving for the closest fit between what is observed from a collection of instances and the verbal description employed. How clear, we might say, is the isomorphism between the observed and the description? What role do metaphor, analogy, and homology play? How do linguistic and diagrammatic transformations fit in? Identifying what a theory *does*, on the other hand, involves describing the effects it brings about. Cook is asking us, then, to think of a theory as a Dahlhausian 'event', a link in a sequence of causes and effects. Furthermore, the effects, or changes, a theory brings about are of *political* import: theorising – for example in the guise of analysis – necessarily involves supporting or undermining vested interests.

The article ends with a well-considered example of how theorising can produce possibly unintended political effects. Cook examines an analysis of some progressive post-bop jazz (Thelonius Monk and Eric Dolphy), couched in

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[108] In the essay entitled 'Analysing Performance and Performing Analysis'.
[109] Cook, 'Analysing Performance and Performing Analysis', p.242.

the analytical terminology developed for and associated with notated art music. The analysis sets about demonstrating that the music contains a calculated complexity (e.g. of cross-rhythms). Cook points out how the analyst (Cynthia Folio) leads us through an argument – complexity equals superior rational control equals quality – which terminates in her claiming that the music has value, because it contains and expresses what Western music theorists think good music *should* contain. Much turns on the use of the word 'express': the music, it is claimed in the analysis, 'expresses' certain things. In Cook's view, the confusion here is between 'expression' – which Folio uses to suggest a natural, inevitable relation of cause and effect – and Cook's preferred term 'representation', which is a matter of construction. This 'exercise in academic canon formation' (as Cook calls it) has the further (possibly unintended) consequence of neutralising the music's exotic 'otherness'.[110] In short, this is a brilliant demonstration of how the unthinking imposition of one set of received values in a novel setting – in this case formal academic analytical techniques applied to Afro-American jazz – generates oddly inappropriate results. The musicians, it is suggested, are patronised by Folio's imputation that they intended what her analysis implies. The 'unmasking' strategy Cook employs here is typical, as is the critical aptitude with which it is followed.[111]

One of the problems, then, with this analysis is that calculated intentions are being imputed to musicians whose live, improvised music – in recorded form – is being subjected to sophisticated, considered analysis. The question of what the analysis achieves depends rather on which practice we are thinking of and how readers might respond to it. (It might have positive effects on some readers.) The mistake would seem to be Folio's apparently unthinking 'appropriation' of the music, her assumption that all music can be heard in terms of the Western academic theoretical paradigm. After all, Cook does not deny the competence of Folio's analysis as such; rather he casts doubt on the appropriateness of the chain of causes and effects Folio sets up around them.

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[110] Ibid, p.260.

[111] Other notable examples in Cook's output include his article 'Perception: a Perspective from Music Theory', in *Musical Perceptions*, eds. Rita Aeillo with John Sloboda (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p.64-99; and 'Music minus One: Rock, Theory and Performance'.

What is clear is that the relation between 'what a theory *represents* and what it *does*', between representation and effect, is not straightforward because it depends in turn upon the existence of a validating interpretative community, or practice. If the effects of a theory are performative, they perform within a setting i.e. within a discourse or practice. Without some knowledge of audience and setting – who is reading the theory, in what context – it becomes difficult to claim that the theory means a *particular* thing.

Where does Cook derive the notion that a theory (or analysis) is performative because of what it 'does'? His ideas are traceable back to Wittgenstein, filtered through various sources.[112] Particularly important is the role of speech act theory: language, it is argued, does not (only) represent reality, it also constructs it. Or to put it another way, the world of language is a construction (whose content is concepts) and the 'real' world is a perceptual construction which language purports to represent. Representation and construction are inseparable: in order to achieve the former, you must undertake the latter. The language world consists (in part, at least) of 'speech acts' and an example Cook has used is the promise.[113] A promise is not a report, it is an act, with consequences. Having established this, he goes on to claim that 'an analysis is like a promise: it is an action disguised as a statement of fact'.[114] From here is but a short step to claiming that theories and the analyses which support them are performative because they have consequences which are politically important. In other words, performances are acts which should be judged by their consequences.

Here I think it useful to return to the distinction between a 'literary' notion of performance and genuinely processual performances which retain a

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[112] Of further interest here is the article by Joanna Hodge, entitled 'Aesthetic Decomposition: Music, Identity and Time', collected in *The Interpretation of Music*, ed. Michael Krausz (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), p.247-258, which meditates on the nature of reifications. She makes an interesting connection between the conception of human identity and the artwork – especially the musical artwork – as both being reifications of processes. This article is discussed by Cook in *Music: a Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), chapter 5.

[113] Cook, *Music: a Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p.77: '... in saying "I promise" you are *doing* something, not just reporting on something.' See also Cook, 'Analysing Performance and Performing Analysis', p.257.

[114] Cook, 'Analysing Performance and Performing Analysis', p.257.

unity of time, place and action. An analysis in the form of a text is clearly an example of the former. It is unlike a musical performance in two ways: firstly because it uses language and secondly because the performative moments of reading and writing are separated in time and cannot interact. There is no possibility of feedback. My reservation about Cook's identification of an analysis with a performance arises from this point. Whereas in a processual performance the performer can gauge the effect she is having on an audience immediately, in the case of a literary text this is impossible: to an extent the effects the text has (what it does) are unforeseeable and uncontrollable.

The problem in applying speech act theory to musical performance is similar. The meaning of a speech act depends both on the words used and the context within which they occur. But instrumental music has no vocabulary and its meaning is more elusive. By applying speech act theory to music we stress a compatibility between the two domains. But why should we? As one commentator puts it:

> Music, it might be argued, is so utterly and irreducibly specific, its meaning so embedded in its essence, that we are forced to borrow from other systems of thought in order to attempt any kind of description at all.[115]

Cook's theory of performance is based on a couple of overlapping key distinctions: between representation and construction, and representation and effect. It also moves freely between different modes of representation – speech, writing and music-making – applying the performance concept equally to all. I propose that we put aside his distinction between 'representations' and 'what they do': thinking about a performance in terms of the effects it has is ultimately only possible by examining the process of reception (which in the case of a literary text is separated from the moment of production). I suggest we return instead to a weaker opposition between reifications and processes. A reification is a stored representation (such as a text, a diagram, a recording, musical

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[115] Samson, 'Analysis in Context', p.47.

notation, a picture etc.) and by process I mean the processual performance entailed in retrieving what is reified in real time.

By placing performance at the centre of the conceptual network in this way, we can see how the culture comes to consist of many different types of reified representations constantly being performed and recycled as new, related representations. Put simply, we could say that the only things we *have* in a culture are representations and the only thing we can do with them is *perform* them. And it is the performance concept, viewed as process, that can rescue us from what Cook sees as 'the greatest danger attendant upon the alignment of words with music, which is that of premature closure'.[116]

Postscript: Gould on Performance

Both Nicholas Cook and Jonathan Dunsby cite Glenn Gould on performance approvingly, Cook to provide a contrast with the views of Wallace Berry and Dunsby as a general thematic pointer heading a chapter (entitled 'Recent Thought' on performance) and at one point within the chapter to underpin an argument in favour of an organised, scholarly approach to performing.[117] The point both wish to make in quoting Gould is that a performer cannot plan every detail in advance. However, it is interesting to note that Gould's original words do not refer to processual performance in front of an audience, but to recording a work in a recording studio. I will quote his words at length. The portion Dunsby and Cook cite is in italics:

> Certainly, when you're making a recording you are left alone. You're not surrounded by five hundred, five thousand, fifty thousand people who are in a position to say at that moment, 'Aha, that's what he thinks about that work, eh!' But that seems to me a great advantage. Because *I think that the ideal way to go about making a*

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[116] Cook, 'Analysing Performance and Performing Analysis', p.258.

[117] Cook, 'Analysing Performance and Performing Analysis', p.248. He is reviewing Wallace Berry's book *Musical Structure and Performance* (New Haven, 1989) at this point. The quotation is acknowledged as coming from Dunsby, *Performing Music: Shared Concerns* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), chapter 4, p.39 and 46.

performance or a work of art – and I don't think that they should be different, really – *is to assume that when you begin, you don't quite know what it is about. You only come to know as you proceed.* As you get two thirds of the way through the session, you are two thirds of the way along toward a conception. I very rarely know, when I come to the studio, exactly how I am going to do something.

A little further on he adds:

> It makes the performer very like the composer, really, because it gives him editorial afterthought, it gives him that power… Well obviously, this is something that you cannot do in a concert, if only because you can't stop, as I always wanted to, and say, 'Take two'.[118]

In this passage Gould uses performance in two different senses. The first signifies a reified, constructed product: he talks of 'making a performance' out of the different takes of a piece he records, compares and assembles into a final version which is put out as a recording. The second sense – processual performance in front of a live audience – is only implied, but clearly so. Taking the interview as a whole, we find instances of his using 'performance' to describe both particular recordings (especially Rubenstein's version of the Brahms piano quintet) and 'playing before an audience at a concert'.[119] In fact what allowed Gould to take this remarkably relaxed attitude towards recording – whereby he effectively experimented with different interpretative strategies in the studio – was the indulgence of his record company, who were prepared to grant him an almost completely free hand in his choice of repertoire and modus operandi, in the knowledge that high sales figures were guaranteed. In other words, Gould's approach is anything but typical. The fact is that Gould gave up public performance because of the – as he experienced them – inhuman demands it made on him artistically and physically. In particular, he seems to

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[118] *The Glenn Gould Reader*, ed. Tim Page (London: Faber, 1988), p.287. The context is an interview, reported by Gould, with Rubenstein, originally published in 1971.

[119] Throughout the rest of the interview, in which Gould heaps praises on Rubenstein's recording of the Brahms Piano Quintet, he identifies this recording as a 'performance'. (See Page, *The Glenn Gould Reader*, p.288-9). He uses performance in the sense of 'playing before an audience at a concert' on p.285.

have felt that the lack of control in the live performance situation fatally compromised the musical outcome. All this makes the quotation a decidedly less appropriate illustration of the point that in performance 'you don't quite know what it is about' and that 'you only come to know as you proceed'. For it is in a live, processual performance in front of an audience that this is truly the case.

Part Three: The Solo Pianist in Performance

Degrees of Performativity

Kingsbury has pointed in passing to the terminological problem I have pursued at some length: differences between colloquial and various technical uses of the term 'performance'. He comments as follows:

> … among conservatory musicians *performance* usually refers specifically to formally framed events in which music is sung or played before an audience. By contrast, among many anthropologists and ethnomusicologists, the notion of "performance" tends to be used to refer inclusively to any and all manifestations of the social making and doing of music.[120]

In its colloquial sense, then, performance refers to concerts and recital giving. Kingsbury introduces the term *rendition* to cover those instances of performing where the audience includes a teacher and peers (or either separately). Though this term is not in common use colloquially, it does occur from time to time.[121] He adds in a footnote to the above comments that the same problem pertains to the word 'practice', which has a social science meaning derived from the Marxist notion of *praxis* (to refer to any social activity). Conservatory musicians use the word in the sense of 'rehearse' i.e. to apply to 'training for future musical activity'. To this he adds that

> … the notions of performance, rendition and practice form a continuum of overlapping categories, and distinctions among them are made by musicians with regard to social context or frame.[122]

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[120] Kingsbury, *Music, Talent and Performance*, p.115.

[121] Interestingly, Kullak's translator uses it in his piano method, presumably as an equivalent of Aufführung. I am not aware if the term was common currency in the nineteenth century. Adolph Kullak, *The Aesthetics of Pianoforte-playing*, trans. Theodore Baker (New York: Da Capo, 1972. original edition of this translation New York, 1893). Rendition includes senses of 'restoring' (giving back, returning) and covering (c.f. the 'cover version' in popular music).

[122] Kingsbury, *Music, Talent and Performance*, p.187.

That performativity comes in degrees is something musicians will be well aware of. Playing in a lax, disengaged manner in front of an audience is no better an example of performance than playing with great concentration and commitment for oneself alone. Both are less than 'full' performance.

A number of other terms have been employed on occasion to grade distinctions more finely. Stravinsky, for example, distinguished between 'execution' and 'interpretation', whereby the former term stands for that style of pure, 'objective' performance upheld as an ideal, widely fashionable in Continental Europe in the inter-war years, and associated with 'Neue Sachlichkeit'. It was contrasted with the performer's presence as interpreter, to be denigrated for adding to and in the process distorting the music:

> It is the conflict of these two principles – execution and interpretation – that is at the root of all the errors, all the sins, all the misunderstandings that interpose themselves between the musical work and the listener and prevent a faithful transmission of its message.[123]

One might indeed include the word 'transmission' here as a rough synonym for execution. The extreme point towards which Stravinsky's views tend is a notion of scrupulous fidelity to the text. However, the suggestion that the notated text can be realised as music without any interpretative intervention is logically impossible, given the various indeterminacies and ambiguities notation entails. The best that can be hoped for is a conception of interpretation graded in terms of adherence.

Richard Poirier's memorable description of performance as 'an accumulation of secretive acts' captures rather well the gradual, detailed, private preparations needed by musicians – preparations both of the self and the work – if public performance is to be satisfactory. Kingsbury's list of overlapping categories describing how the performer 'edges into the frame' fulfils a real need: performance preparation characteristically involves trials in situations

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[123] Stravinsky's words are quoted by Taruskin in *Text and Act: Essays on Music and Performance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p.129. Stravinsky discusses Performance styles in the 'sixth lesson' of his *Poetics of Music in the Form of Six Lessons* (London: Oxford University Press, 1942).

which are less extended or less 'integrated' than that of the goal. Students 'perform' – in this compromised sense of the word – all or only part of a work for their teacher only (a whole programme played through would probably be thought of as a rehearsal); one can perform (some, all of the music in preparation) for oneself, or commonly nowadays, for a tape recorder; for friends only in a 'safe' environment; on one's own instrument; or on a different instrument in the empty hall; even in intentionally more demanding situations (with added distractions, handicaps etc.). I argued above that the special situation of the competition (to which we can add the examination) is also something decisively less than full performance, because its judgmental aspect encourages an emphasis on exactitude and an added strictness in obeying convention. One might even understand Said's characterisation of performance as an 'extreme occasion' in these terms.[124]

Here in summary is a checklist of the terms in common use:

1. Practice: neutral as regards what is played, but normally private.

2. Play-through: signifies an 'uncommitted trial' or 'dry-run'.

3. Rendition: a performance where the emphasis is on correctness, possibly in a relatively stress-free situation.

4. Execution: to play with the minimum of interpretative intervention (following Stravinsky's use), roughly equivalent in sense to the German 'Ausfűhrung'.[125]

5. Rehearsal: normally used for social music-making or for a soloist who plays a whole programme through in a situation close to that of the projected performance.

6. Performance is an act characterised by uniqueness in time and space, which

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[124] The 'extremity' Said is thinking of is not *quite* what I have in mind here, though they are linked: Said is presumably thinking of an element of alienating distance separating audience and performer. Edward Said's lecture 'Performance as an Extreme Occasion' is the first chapter of *Musical Elaborations* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1991).

[125] 'Aufführung' and 'Vortragen' are the closest German equivalents of performance in its musical sense. The word 'Vortrag' has a similar vocal inflection to our word 'recital'. 'Ausführung' differs from 'Aufführung' in the sense that the latter term implies a composition notated so completely that improvisation or embellishment is unnecessary. (For a brief elucidation, see Goehr, 'The Perfect Performance of Music and the Perfect Musical Performance', p.5.) Related terms are 'Durchführen' (=carry out an action, with an emphasis on getting to the end); 'Darstellen' (=portray, as in character or display, as in art); 'Proben' (=rehearse); Performance is used as a loan word to signify the event; and the technical term 'Performanz' is used in linguistics in a similar way to its English use.

necessarily includes an audience and typically involves them. It is distinguishable from play-through or rehearsal through the quality of intentionality that motivates it: a commitment to express the music's meaning in a personal way to particular people in a particular setting.

Performance Frames

Fanny Waterman has said that '...any performer must recognise that a performance is the sum total of what he plays and that sum total is the message his audience will receive.'[126] What exactly is it the sum of? Viewed from the performer's perspective, it presents itself as a series of frames within frames, where each frame (or level) focuses on a smaller time/space unity.[127] From the performer's point of view the key question is: how much control do I exercise over each frame? Beyond this, how can I bring a series of potentially disparate, fragmented acts, objects and people together so that they add up to a performance? Here we might distinguish between conventional elements of the performance occasion and those that the performer actively takes responsibility for. The theme here is control as an expression of the commitment the performer brings to the performance occasion. The performance principles I proposed above require him to do this and I repeat them here:

1. To perform a work in such a way that a considered personal interpretation is audibly manifest.
2. To derive a personal interpretation as far as possible from the evidence the work and its tradition of performance provides.
3. To perform with personal commitment and a heightened sense of awareness of what is taking place; to respect the uniqueness of the occasion and each moment within it.
4. To exercise whatever control one can over the content and context of the

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[126] Wendy Thompson with Fanny Waterman, *Piano Competition: The Story of Leeds* (London: Faber and Faber, 1990), p.39.

[127] See my comments on Marvin Minsky's work in chapter one (under **Some Competing Definitions of Performance: (1) The Social Sciences**, point 4).

performance occasion such that the other virtues are readily perceivable.

We can best describe this desire for control as occurring on several levels. It is useful to distinguish three levels of possible 'performance unity' and a fourth contextualising level. There is the contextualising level of career; followed by the levels of occasion, programme and work. The level of career invokes the issue of narrative unity of lived life addressed by Macintyre. At the next level down – the occasion – a performer's control has already begun to accede to outsiders, such as agents and organisers. Here a whole raft of factors might be investigated, including, for example, the role of texts (advertising, programme notes), the choice of venue and instrument, or dress codes. Some of these matters are discussed by Heister and Lebrecht.[128]

I will devote some space to a few comments on the level of the programme. The first point to be made here is that, regardless of the orientation within the practice the performer has, the work is likely to remain the dominant level:

> What matters is not how one plans music but how one actually *makes* it. A single satisfactory performance of a truly great work, such as a Beethoven symphony – and how rare such performances are! – constitutes a better

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[128] Hans-Werner Heister, *Das Konzert: Theorie einer Kulturform* in two volumes (Wilhemshaven: Heinrichshofen, 1983). Norman Lebrecht, *When the Music stops... Managers, Maestros and the Corporate Murder of Classical Music* (London: Simon and Schuster, 1996). As an example of how pianists deal with the difficulty of having to play different pianos at each concert, I will quote Andre Watts, who talks revealingly about this in interview with David Dubal. See David Dubal, *The World of the Concert Pianist: Conversations with 35 Internationally Celebrated Pianists* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1985). The following quotation is from p.326-327. It is his description of his 'method' for getting to know the piano he will play his next concert on: 'When I arrive at the hall I calmly gaze at it for a long moment. This is my way of saying "hello" to it. I never touch it right away. But then I sit down to play and the piano reveals its qualities to me. Very quickly I find out if the bass is muddy or the treble is weak, and here begins my psychological adjustment to the instrument. I now have to make a choice. Will I be friends with the instrument or will I spoil a whole evening fighting with it? In order to make friends, I must accept the weaknesses of the instrument. This is the state the piano is in. It's not trying to get you. It's not trying to do you out of your success with your concert. Of course this state of mind isn't easy to achieve – it involves a very critical kind of adjustment. It's heartbreaking to realise that so many of the effects you have worked your guts out for will be lost. But there will inevitably be someplace in the piece you're playing where a pianissimo will create a wonderful wash of sound. So you must allow yourself to feel that somehow the piano will help you.' There are a few pianists who have toured with their own pianos in an attempt to avoid this ultimately insoluble problem. They are rather rare exceptions, even today.

> programme than all 'thematic' programmes put together. This is the moment, the only moment, when we discover whether or not a concert has become a true experiential reality.[129]

These comments were made by Wilhelm Furtwängler, in an essay originally published in 1930. His prime interest is the orchestral concert, but what he has to say applies to the solo recital. It is beyond the scope of this study to undertake a review of how programming practice has changed over the last century and a half and concert programming is one of those practicalities of performance which have generated relatively little comment. Nonetheless there are certain recurrent issues which are worth pointing to.

The first example concerns the relationship of unity to diversity. Two modes of programme unification occur regularly. The first is to treat the programme as homologous with the history of music, placing works in historical order so that for example, the level of dissonance is leavened.[130] Among pianists, recitals (or recital series) which attempt historical surveys were an early variant of this, popularised in the nineteenth century by Anton Rubenstein and others. A second is to view a programme in terms of some other metaphor of process or consumption, such as the menu. Alfred Brendel quotes these comments by Schnabel on programming:

> ... the first condition of a good menu is that all dishes should be prepared by the same chef or several chefs of equal merit; that all should be prepared with first-class raw materials, and that the gourmet should concentrate with the same seriousness on all of them.[131]

Others, such as the virtuoso Jorge Bolet, use the menu metaphor to argue in the opposite direction: the concert should be home not just to great works but to

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[129] Wilhelm Furtwängler, *Furtwängler on Music: Essays and Addresses*, ed. and trans. Ronald Taylor (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1991), p.3-7, (p.6).

[130] Furtwängler's example is Haydn and Tchaikovsky symphonies, which in his opinion only work well in historical order.

[131] Brendel's essay is in *Music Sounded Out: Essays, Lectures, Interviews, Afterthoughts* (London: Robson, 1990), p.208-217. The quotation from Schnabel is on p.209. The 'performance-as-recipe' metaphor is explored at some length by J. O. Urmson in 'The Ethics of Musical Performance', in Krausz, *The Interpretation of Music*, p.157-164.

well composed lightweight music ('bonbons').[132] Viewed in terms of Goehr's double practice, there is a tendency for work-orientated pianists to favour edification and virtuosi entertainment. This is nicely exemplified in the views and practice of Schnabel on the one hand and Bolet on the other. 'Edifiers' plan surveys and 'entertainers' find the appropriate response to the moment. The extreme virtuoso practice would involve doing away with prior programming at all and making the choice of works appear spontaneous. The practice of playing encores effectively smudges the performance frame in just this way, creating a kind of 'structural' spontaneity. In this respect the themes of reification and fluidity are echoed at the programme level.

In fact Furtwängler stresses the importance of what he calls 'creative contrast' over programmes which are organised around unifying 'themes', such as one genre, or one composer. The performer, he says, cannot allow himself to be drawn by either historical or systematic intellectual principles in shaping programmes:

> Music is not there to be perceived, reviewed or categorised in terms of historical contexts. It is there to be enjoyed. If a thematic programme is successful, whatever its nature, then it is in spite of its theme, not because of it. Any concept of unity cannot but be at odds with the fact that, emotionally and by its inner nature, music lives by contrasts.[133]

Furtwängler's comments here, opposing a mode of listening which categorises music historically against a mode which champions 'enjoyment' do not so much anticipate Cook's exploration of the same theme (in *Music, Imagination and Culture*) as demonstrate the recurrence of this issue throughout the history of the concert.[134] Any attempt to draw a systematic distinction between (performer) entertainment and (listener) enjoyment is likely to fail, however.

Alfred Brendel's essay on the same topic, published nearly sixty years

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[132] Elyse Mach, interview with Jorge Bolet in *Great Pianists Speak for Themselves* (New York: Dover, 1991, two volumes issued as one), volume 2, p.21-41, esp. p.34.
[133] Furtwängler, *Furtwängler on Music*, p.4.
[134] Stephen Davies points this out in his comments on Cook's work in *Musical Meaning and Expression* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), p.333, footnote 11.

later, reiterates many of the points his predecessor makes. At the same time, changes of emphasis, mostly relatively minor, suggest a shift away from 'enjoyment' towards 'edification' in his views. Brendel's guiding principle is not 'creative contrast' but contrast and connection.[135] In general he is more willing than Furtwängler to countenance 'thematic' programmes, such as those based on 'variations' or a single composer's output.[136] He links this in turn to the need for the performer to follow her own taste and convictions. The solo piano repertory is so large, he says, that no individual can hope to master more than a portion of it. One must be selective. 'The performer should not dodge the obligation to be edifying' he advises sternly:

> His sense of quality has to inform the audience. In his programming, he should not give in to commercial demands. The more uncompromisingly a performer follows his own convictions, the better for his self-esteem and, in the long run, the esteem in which he is held by others.[137]

From Brendel's perspective, entertainment is a negative value, dirtied by its association with commerce. It threatens the integrity of the musician and the whole individualist ethos of art music concert-giving.

> The traditional oppositions of unity vs. diversity/contrast, enjoyment/entertainment vs. edification and planning vs. spontaneity have in more recent times been supplemented by a value which is indicative of the age of the practice. 'Defamiliarisation' as a performance strategy is associated with

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[135] Brendel, *Music Sounded Out*, p.210. Following Furtwängler, Brendel mentions the importance of developing an instinct for what works together, for example in deciding the order of items; on the need to give contemporary music serious consideration in programming; or, more mundanely, on ensuring a contrast of keys between works. He points to the reduced length of modern programmes, the demise of the menu-style programme of pieces (light, heavy, frivolous) and the reduced importance of the show-stopping finale. Quiet endings can point towards the transcendental: indeed, no other programming position is appropriate, he argues, for works like the Beethoven Diabelli Variations, or the Op.111 sonata. Opening pieces similarly need careful thought, both for the (physical) demands they make on the pianist and the audience, as yet to acclimatise (he provides a list of possibilities); or which juxtapose starkly contrasting styles. This last point hints at the theme of 'defamiliarisation'.

[136] This may also reflect the 'elitist' nature of the piano recital, as opposed to more 'populist' forms like the orchestral concert.

the rise of the 'performance authenticity' issue.[138]

[137] Brendel, *Music Sounded Out*, p.216.

[138] Taruskin, *Text and Act* and Bernard D. Sherman, *Inside Early Music: Conversations with Performers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) are useful sources here.

Chapter 4: Interpretation

Part One: Interpretation

Introduction

One of the aims of this study has been to investigate the meaning of key terms surrounding the discourse of performance. My strategy in the previous chapter was to examine and compare existing definitions and pursue the causes of difference. At issue is the question of specificity: what is the range of a definition? How large is the class of specific instances it wishes to generalise on/from? There are two points to make here. We have seen how in the case of performance theories varying inflections and nuances both cause and allow the theorist to deal with quite different, even mutually exclusive phenomena in the name of 'performance'. In other words, different theories serve different fields. Secondly, it is clear that ever more technical definitions aim to account for fewer instances. For example, the phenomenon of classical art music performance is a rather special kind of performance which might be subsumed within a larger area of traditional high art performance (including, for example, theatre and dance) in which the roles of performer and audience are relatively discrete, predictable and prescribed.

There are two structuring metaphors in play here. Firstly, there is the familiar notion of the hermeneutic circle, in which a classification of phenomena is created by an act of defining and labelling and kept alive by ongoing redefinition.[1] Behind this lies an ontological debate about essence and construction. A second metaphor is that of levels or layering, which raises a more general question about how far one level can be reduced to another. With these comments in mind, I will now glance briefly at two general commentaries on the concept and meaning of the subject of this chapter: interpretation.

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[1] A recent example of such a critical analysis is Terry Eagleton's essay on the concept of culture, *The Idea of Culture*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000).

General Definitions of Interpretation

I want to move towards a view of interpretation which acknowledges two opposing tendencies, those of uniqueness of content and similarity of form. Interpretation has a subjective, mental aspect. It is at home in the mind and inseparable from the individual who carries it within him. The fact is that the contents of mind are unique and crucially inaccessible to all but the subject himself. On the other hand, minds share many features in the way they store and process information. I will make one guiding distinction at the outset. It is between interpretation as a receptive act, whose goal is the creation of a mental representation, and productive performances of this mental representation. This distinction – between 'receptive' and productive' forms of interpretation – will recur below.

Let me begin by quoting Daniel Dennett's 'perception level' description of interpretation:

> … there must be a process (or perhaps a variety of processes) for turning raw or crude information into the useful materials from which 'we' can construct our beliefs and plans. This refining/transforming process is largely if not entirely unconscious, and is often called *interpretation*. Its product is traditionally called *understanding*.[2]

Dennett's formulation suggests we think of interpretation as a process or transformation, with understanding as a product: it is a clear statement of 'receptive' interpretation. From a terminological point of view, this idea seems most familiar when applied to the listening process, the reception of music. The adjustments necessary to bring it in line with what I have said about performance above are, as I have implied, quite superficial. Nonetheless, they can appear unsettling. An interpretation of a piece of music – in the sense in which I am going to use the term – is the outcome of the *process* of interpreting. At the same time, I identified real time processes as central to the ontology of performance: the process

of interpretation can also be viewed as a kind of performance. We would have to specify a model of how to listen, including, for example, details of the occasion, the frame, the audience (the self-conscious self in this case?) to reformulate listening as a kind of performance. (One example of this might be what has been called 'structural listening'.[3])

This may seem to complicate matters unduly. Dennett's description makes a distinction between a process, which he calls interpretation, and a product, labelled understanding. I will not be using the verb 'to interpret' in this processual sense. Rather I will reserve the term 'interpretation' to describe a mental structure with a certain stability, equivalent to his concept of 'understanding'. Beyond this, I would like to retain his distinction between three stages. First there is the 'raw data' of the external world; then there is the transforming process occurring within the individual in the act of interpreting; and finally there is the individual's mental product.[4]

I have already referred to Charles Taylor's well-known article on 'interpretation and the sciences of man'.[5] Though his terminology is rather different, I think we can discern a rather similar set of conditions in play. Taylor sees the goal of interpretation as 'an attempt to make clear, to make sense of an object of study'.[6] In order for this attempt to proceed, he specifies three conditions.

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[2] Daniel Dennett, *Brainchildren: Essays on Designing Minds* (London: Penguin, 1998), p.60.

[3] Felix Salzer's book *Structural Hearing: Tonal Coherence in Music* (New York: Dover, 1962) prescribes such a pedagogy of how to listen, or rather how to perform the perfect act of listening. The preface begins with these words: 'To the gifted and experienced musician, music is a language – to be understood in sentences, paragraphs and chapters'. In chapter three (**Narrowing the Focus: Theories and Descriptions of Musical Performance**) I mentioned Simon Frith's view that listening is a kind of performance (*Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p.203-4).

[4] I acknowledge the tendentious quality of the phrase 'raw data' and its implication that there is a neutral, unambiguous, objective level which we can all refer to as perceiving individuals. Rather than embark on a philosophical debate about the reality of the noumenal world (and by implication the origins of Idealism) I suggest we think of raw data as a level of input, distinguishable in principle at least from the two subsequent stages of transformation and storage. For those wishing to pursue the topic of the noumenal/phenomenal, Roger Scruton's study of *Kant* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982) provides a convenient way in. See chapter 4: 'The Logic of Illusion'.

[5] Charles Taylor, 'Interpretation and the Sciences of Man', reprinted (with some slight alterations) as 'Hermeneutics and Politics' in *Critical Sociology*, ed. Paul Connerton (London: Penguin, 1976), p.153-193. I have taken the quotations from the latter source. See also chapter three above (**Some Competing Definitions of Performance: (1) The Social Sciences**).

[6] Taylor, 'Interpretation and the Sciences of Man', p.153.

First, he says, there must be 'an object, or field of objects, about which we can speak in terms of coherence or its absence, of making sense or nonsense'.[7] This corresponds roughly with Dennett's 'raw data'. Second, there must be a distinction between an original and a (clarifying) interpretation of it (bridged by Dennett's transforming process). Taylor claims that the distinction between an original and an interpretation entails a further distinction between what something means and how it is expressed. This distinction between meaning and expression, he says, is always relative and contains an element of arbitrariness. This is Taylor's acknowledgement of the impossibility of total identity between objects or events across time and space.[8]

For my purposes we need to hold fast to a link between the creation of a mental product and its subsequent performance. (Tortuous though the logic may be, it is quite possible to describe this creation as a 'performance' of a kind too, as it is itself a process.) Using my terminology, Taylor's 'expressions of a meaning' become 'performances of an interpretation'. The practical impossibility of synonymy between meaning and expression echoes the impossibility of total identity between performances. Again, there is an echo of Dennett's notion of transformation, linked now to Taylor's element of arbitrariness. His third condition is that there must be a notional subject (in the sense of individual) in whom an interpretation resides and for whom it makes sense, or coheres. Compare again Dennett, who problematises the role of the subject by his use of scare quotes, referring to 'we' in the quotation above.

In short, I take both Dennett and Taylor to be distinguishing between three stages in the construction of an interpretation: input, transformation, and mental outcome. I have hinted at some of the adjustments that have to be made to such models if we are to employ the concept of processual performance within them. Performance itself would be a further stage following outcome: real time output (accompanied by a further transformation). If we accept the definition of performance as a real time process, a musical interpretation becomes a member of a

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[7] Ibid, p.153.
[8] Ibid, p.154.

rather diverse class of products which are nonetheless united by a common function, which is *to provide storage for representations of music*. There are basically three categories of storage, each with a variety of subcategories. These are:

1. Spatial notation, including manuscripts, published editions and any other notated versions of music, paper based or otherwise, accessed visually.
2. Audio recordings of various kinds, including the whole diverse history of analogue and digital disc and tape recording, but also other mechanical forms of storage, such as piano rolls.
3. Mental representations of music: above all the conception of a performer's interpretation of a piece.

These categories are not completely separable. For example, arrangements, transcriptions and reductions of music may or may not be notated. It is also possible to notate music spatially, but to access it through some other sensory mode than vision (e.g. in braille). The categories above also imply different kinds of performances by different kinds of 'performer'.[9] Documented analyses pose a special problem of categorisation. In certain circumstances they may overlap with the editing process, as they do for example in Schnabel's editions of Beethoven. The problematic role of analysis per se in musical interpretation and performance is one that I will discuss presently. In the third part of this chapter, I will return to the subject of musical representations in a discussion of forms of cultural transmission.

The initial opposition between storage (= representation) and retrieval (= performance) I am setting up here is a crude one. Dunsby has warned of the

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[9] We may balk at the use of the term in certain instances, of course. An example I have already mentioned would be where no real skill is involved (skill being linked to real-time feedback and control): we operate a CD player, rather than perform on it. This is discussed by Stan Godlovitch in *Musical Performance: a Philosophical Study* (London: Routledge, 1998), chapter 1, especially p.26. (See also chapter three, **Narrowing the Focus: Theories and Descriptions of Musical Performance** above.)

dangers of simplistic binary thinking about performance.[10] We should note immediately that mental representations of music (as opposed to the other categories of representation mentioned above) are a special case. In a sense they represent a raison d'être for the phenomenon of music. They are at least minimally implicated as an adjunct or partner of the other categories of representations: none of them can mean anything without human action and involvement. I will argue that the practice of art music performance – within a particular historical window – gains a portion of its intrinsic interest and richness from the mutual interdependence of a highly structured, considered mental interpretation and a unique performance occasion. Beyond this, there is the issue of how different modes of storage and processes of retrieval have affected performances in systematic, predictable ways and the extent to which this explains cultural preferences for particular kinds of performance. In the following sections I examine briefly the emergence and history of the concept of interpretation as applied to art music before pursuing the topic of analysis and its relationship to interpretation.

Musical Interpretation: Modes and Emergence

Hermann Danuser notes that the emergence of musical interpretation is a consequence of musical notation, drawing attention to the precedent of textual interpretation. He comments that this concept of interpretation arrives in music relatively late, becoming 'possible' initially in the nineteenth century and 'necessary' in the twentieth.[11] Interpretation, as an intentional act (or 'mental object'), was thus not always present in performance in the past, and need not be today. Jerrold Levinson discusses this in more detail.[12] In the foregoing I preshadowed his primary distinction, which is between 'hermeneutic' and

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[10] See Dunsby's article 'Acts of Recall' in *Musical Times*, (January 1997), p.12-17.
[11] Hermann Danuser, 'Interpretation', in *Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (MGG) volume 4, (Sachteil), (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1998), p.1054-1070. Of related interest here is the article entitled 'Vortrag', also by Danuser, in *Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (MGG) volume 9, (Sachteil), (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1998), p.1821-1835.
[12] Jerrold Levinson, 'Performative versus Critical Interpretation in Music' in *The Interpretation of Music: Philosophical Essays*, ed. Michael Krausz (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), p.33-60.

'performative' modes of interpretation, each mode exhibiting further subcategories. Hermeneutic interpretation is receptive, aiming to generate understanding, while performative interpretation is production-orientated, concerned with musical expression. Danuser's hermeneutic/receptive modes of musical interpretation are of three kinds: structural, associative and stylistic (respectively). He labels them as follows:

1. Interpretation as understanding of internal structure.
2. Interpretation as the linking of external factors (biographical, historical) to the musical work.
3. Interpretation as a positioning of the work within a larger body of music (taking in the issues of style and canonicity).

Performative/productive modes of interpretation also number three in Danuser's scheme. These are:

1. Interpretation as historical reconstruction.
2. Interpretation as the continuation of a tradition or practice.
3. Interpretation as updating, or rendering contemporary.

It will be clear on reflection that these three categories effectively entail each other: all performative interpretation (inseparable as it is from performance) is a rendering contemporary, within a tradition, of a text of historical origins.

Jerrold Levinson's classification of interpretation, though analytically rather than historically motivated, is substantially similar: for receptive/hermeneutic read 'critical', for productive read 'performative'.[13] It is his terminology which I will use in my discussion.

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[13] Levinson, 'Performative versus Critical Interpretation in Music'. Levinson's definition of a performative interpretation is as follows: '... a considered way of playing a piece of music, involving highly specific determinations of all the defining features of the piece as given by the score and its associated conventions of reading'. He adds that such a performative interpretation is 'in effect a type of performance, which, like the work itself, may have numerous instantiations, as when a performer repeats on distinct occasions a PI he has worked out at an earlier time'. (p.36) Levinson also argues that performative interpretation need not always be present in musical performance, a matter I discuss below.

I have already discussed the views of Dahlhaus and Goehr on what I called 'the double history of pianism': Dahlhaus was cited above as suggesting that the notion of interpreting great works of music was linked to the demise of improvisatory, virtuosic approaches to performance: he also demonstrates how virtuoso elements of keyboard writing were integrated into compositional practice, for example by Liszt. Lydia Goehr contextualises this development within the framework of a double history, that of the interpretation/work-centred 'perfect performance of music' and the performance/performer-centred 'perfect musical performance'.[14] It will be clear that Danuser's bipartite classification echoes that of Goehr (and Dahlhaus), without exactly coinciding with it. An emphasis on the hermeneutic/receptive coincides with Goehr's work-centred 'perfect performance of music' to the extent that they both idealise the work and wish to overlook the actuality of the performance occasion. Another way of thinking about Danuser's two modes is to ally the hermeneutic/receptive with music-theoretical activity, such as analysis. The question is this: how exactly does the performer link the two modes together? What kind of understanding underpins production?

The rise of musical interpretation over the last century and a half has involved a gradual emancipation from external factors (be they extra-musical or musical-stylistic) as a source of inspiration; accompanying this has been an increasing interest in the internal structure of a musical work as a basis for performative interpretation. Jim Samson, in his analysis of Chopin reception, talks of a 'dispersal of meanings' followed by a 'discernible closure', providing a parallel and an exemplification of this historical trend.[15] This shift is apparent too in the growing emphasis on the work itself, in isolation rather than in situ, the composer's composition at the expense of the performer's performance. Goehr herself makes it clear that 'the perfect performance of music' has come to be the dominant strand of performance practice. (The museum's curatory ethos inevitably favoured it from the start.) A putative structure in the work comes to be mirrored

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[14] See chapter one (**History or Histories?**) and chapter two (**The Double History of Pianism**) above.

[15] Jim Samson, 'Chopin reception: theory, history, analysis', in *Chopin Studies 2*, eds. John Rink and Jim Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p.11.

by an ever more fixed mental representation of the music to be performed: we might call this gradual congealing of process into product 'cumulative fixation'. Schoenberg and his circle have been an important influence here.[16] Incidentally, the association of performance with risk – rather than opportunity – is a reflection of the fixed nature of interpretations, which, when highly determined, offer more scope for error (and anxiety).[17] There have been various challenges to this development, such as that obliquely posed by the 'historical authenticity' movement (though the authenticists in practice update as much as they contextualise).[18] The most recent thought on performance and interpretation (by Cook and others) questions this by now well-established reliance on a notion of internal structure, for example by attempting to undermine its objective status.

Rethinking Interpretation: the Avant-Garde

As far as the history of interpretation is concerned, the post-1945 avant-garde marks a watershed. By this point the task of musical interpretation and performance in tandem as a 'bringing to life of the internal structure' was firmly established, though, as comments by Hindemith and Stravinsky show, the balance between performer subjectivity and interpretative fidelity was aggressively

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[16] Nicholas Cook draws attention to this in 'Analysing Performance, Performing Analysis', in *Rethinking Music,* eds. Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p.247-248, especially in footnote 44. I would mention here also the Schoenbergian Erwin Stein's important book *Form and Performance* (London: Faber, 1962) It is discussed (with somewhat grudging approval) by Jonathan Dunsby in *Performing Music: Shared Concerns* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), p.43-45.

[17] Jonathan Dunsby's attitude both reflects this and reflects on it, to sobering effect. '[M]usic is always a risk', he comments, adding that *'we are afraid of musical accidents'*. (His emphasis.) See chapter 3, 'Anxiety and Artistry', in *Performing Music: Shared Concerns*, p.29-38. The quotations are from p.35.

[18] As I suggested above, the three categories of performative interpretation are mutually implicated: all interpretations which are performed necessarily update. Richard Taruskin has demonstrated the overlap of interests in practice, showing how contemporary attempts at historically authentic performance are driven by idealising structuralist aims as much as by a wish to reconstruct the past. The aesthetic desire to update takes the form of its contrary, to anachronise: historical reconstruction simply *is* the preferred form of rendering contemporary. See Richard Taruskin's essay 'The Pastness of the Present and the Presence of the Past', reprinted in *Text and Act: Essays on Music and Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p.90-154.

policed.[19] In contrast to this, contemporary compositional practice in its more progressive guises rendered such an approach impossible. The new music, purged of its last vestiges of tonality and its associated linguistic components, breached the limits of what is mentally storable with the degree of accuracy required to justify the application of the term interpretation. Interpretation thus gives way in this repertoire to 'execution' or the naked realisation of the instructions contained in the score. (The echoes of Stravinsky and Hindemith are more than fortuitous.) Nicholas Cook makes this point in his discussion of Stockhausen's orchestral piece *Gruppen*:

> In fact none of the instrumentalists in a work like *Gruppen* are really playing together: rather, each of them is playing individually with the conductor. They are not to any significant degree interpreting their parts; they are merely executing them with greater or lesser accuracy. And this means that neither the musical beat not the symbols of the score are being abolished in performance; they are being realised.[20]

What Cook says is doubtless equally applicable to solo piano performance. There are degrees of 'interpretation' and it will not always be easy to say at what point a performer's interpretation accedes to execution. Fred Lerdahl's 'cognitive constraints' provide a firm dividing line – certainly firmer than I would wish to specify – and his provocative attempt to link a music's assimilability to human perceptual limits is of relevance here.[21] As I hinted above, the feasibility of performance from memory is as good a practical indicator as any, because it requires the performer to have a nominally continuous and complete mental representation of the work: Schoenberg and Webern's piano works mark the outer

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[19] They were both anxious to defend the work against over-subjective interpretation. Taruskin, 'The Pastness of the Present and the Presence of the Past', p.129.
[20] Nicholas Cook, *Music, Imagination and Culture,* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), p.132.
[21] Fred Lerdahl, 'Cognitive Constraints on Compositional Systems', in *Generative Processes in Music: the Psychology of Performance, Improvisation, and Composition*, ed. John Sloboda (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p.231-259.

limit and the piano works Boulez and Stockhausen composed in the 1950s certainly exceed it.[22]

Dieter Mersch discusses the same phenomenon from a different perspective. Post-modern art productions are, he argues, characteristically events, rather than works; events are performative acts:

> Generally, they cannot be described any longer using the familiar aesthetic categories such as 'form', 'structure', 'intentionality', or 'duration'; rather, their primary structural features consist of 'singularity', 'unrepeatableness', 'uncertainty' and 'momentariness'. [...] They [i.e. such events] correspond to immediate aesthetic experiences, *which are not primarily deduced from interpretation*, but rather from participation and direct physical presence.[23]

The link here is with performance art, and I have already in the previous chapter considered the exemplary theoretical work of Peggy Phelan. We can see how the delicate mutual interdependence – call it an ecology – of performer-interpretation and performance occasion has been disturbed. In the new conceptual network, the audience is invited, or rather challenged, to invent its own interpretation of events. Contrast this with the way in which listening strategies were prescribed in the past.[24] In fact Mersch goes on to argue – I think compellingly – that the uniqueness and uninterpretability of such performance art reinstates the aura Benjamin claims had been lost through the mechanical reproducibility of art.[25] (Perhaps there is a parallel to be drawn here with the advent of the individual interpretation maintaining the aura of a work in the face of the threat of mass print reproduction.)

It is not simply a question of the demise of interpretation and I am not suggesting that contemporary repertoires are the poorer for this 'loss': and the

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[22] I am skating over the issue of how precisely this continuous and complete representation is constituted. For example, to what extent does motoric memory play a role?

[23] Dieter Mersch, 'Ereignis und Aura: Zur Dialectik von ästhetischem Augenblick und kulturellem Gedächtnis' in *Musik und Ästhetik*, Jahrgang 1, Heft 3 (1997), p.20-37; quotation from the English language summary on p.37 (my italics).

[24] Relevant here are Lionel Salter's comments on how to listen, discussed in chapter one (**Review (5): The Concert, Again**).

[25] Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (London: Fontana, 1992).

performer is working as physically and mentally hard (even harder) than ever. Rather, the concept of interpretation in the work of later composers is often radically rethought. There are many explorations of this theme. in the works of Cage, Feldman and Earl Brown in America, or Scelsi, Bussotti, Kagel and Dieter Schnebel elsewhere, any one of which could provide the subject matter for digressions on how interpretation has been rethought. I will discuss one example. Brian Ferneyhough's compositional practice – of an extreme, virtuosic complexity – specifies interpretative strategies of a strikingly novel, one might even say alien, kind. Here the performer is presented with a score so bafflingly complex that only a peculiarly systematic approach to the work – characteristically involving phases of engagement with orientation, detail and larger form – will generate a satisfactory performance. Ferneyhough effectively writes this staged interpretative process into the score, the aim being simultaneously to provoke an extreme commitment to the work on the part of the performer, who is required consciously to go beyond a mere executive notion of performance as the 'realisation of instructions' (this being in any case literally impossible); and to wipe away any trace of the discredited subjectivity associated with the traditional approach.

Ferneyhough's investigation into the nature of interpretation in a sense reformulates the conflict between composer/work and performer/performance as a productive dialectic. In his case he composes music which is so difficult to perform that any serious attempt to recover structure is irredeemably subjective. The paradox is that this subjectivity is an incidental consequence of the interpretative endeavour.[26]

The notion of musical interpretation as a fixed, stable mental representation has historical limits, which coincide roughly with the rise and fall of tonality. We should note in closing that interpretation, however desirable, is by no means a foregone conclusion in the performance of this repertory: it is possible to perform

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[26] Brian Ferneyhough's views on the role of notation for interpretation are variously expressed in *Brian Ferneyhough: Collected Writings*, eds. James Boros and Richard Toop (Amsterdam: Harwood, 1995), accessibly in 'Aspects of Notational and Compositional Practice', p.2-13.

without interpreting.[27] How, then, is the performer to go about creating her interpretation? Insofar as interpretation reflects musical structure, musical analysis has provided the tools for locating it. In the following section I will examine this interaction more closely.

[27] Jerrold Levinson provides examples of performance without performative interpretation: '... (a) performing by rote, without monitoring, letting the phrasings just fall out of one's fingers, by habit; (b) performing an unfamiliar piece in a crunch, hurriedly, but adequately; (c) performing by slavish or unreflective imitation, as when an awestruck pupil mimics the master's reading.' 'Performative vs. Critical Interpretation in Music', p.47. The experience John Sloboda describes as 'floating' – a level of physical familiarity with a piece so great that one can effectively play the piece without consciously guiding the technical process – similarly does not require the existence of a performative interpretation. See *The Musical Mind: The Cognitive Psychology of Music* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), p.96.

Part Two: Interpretation and Analysis

Analysis in Context

What is the relationship between analysis, interpretation and performance? How can we best approach this controversial topic? The familiar question again poses itself: how are we to understand the term 'analysis'? Broadly, in the manner of a dictionary definition, or narrowly, in the specific technical senses in which music theorists employ it?

One approach would be to review the emergence of music analysis as a subdiscipline of academic musical culture, in the hope of demonstrating how an abstract idea – the broad dictionary definition of analysis as 'a division into parts with a view to establishing their relationship' – has acquired an idiosyncratic history of use. Jim Samson has attempted such an outline. He points to an alignment between analysis and music theory, contrasting it with performance as praxis. Thereafter, he links the emergence of analysis as a music-theoretical tool in the nineteenth century to the themes of organicism and the unity of the musical work, which comes to be identified with a notion of form, or, later, structure:

> From early beginnings in theorists such as Adolf Bernhard Marx to later formulations in Riemann, Mersmann, Schoenberg, and Schenker, the idea of a structural sense of form gained unstoppable momentum, sweeping music theory before it, and in the end building on its premiss the entire edifice of a newly independent discipline, music analysis, essentially a discipline of our age. Unity and wholeness, whatever these may mean in a temporal art, were assumed a priori, and the analytical act was their demonstration. The work became a structure, and in that lay its value.[28]

Throughout this essay, Samson is at pains to make us aware of the precariousness of the analytical endeavour in its attempt to integrate objectivity –

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[28] Jim Samson, 'Analysis in Context', in *Rethinking Music,* eds. Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p.33-54, quotation from p.41.

the work – and subjectivity – its individual perception – and ultimately to shore up the work's aesthetic autonomy (the ironic acknowledgement of music's temporality in the quotation above typifies this). There is no doubt, however, that the connection between structure, analysis and value outlined here has exercised an overpowering influence over *thinking* about how performers should go about preparing their interpretations. The actuality is, I suspect, quite another matter. An apparently sincere devotion to an ideal often turns out to be nothing more than a brief genuflexion. Performers have themselves been among the most easily deceived.[29]

In fact, the idea that analysis can establish anything approaching justified true belief – the facts, as it were, about the 'logic' or 'unity' of a work of music – has been if not completely discredited, then heavily qualified.[30] There was a growing realisation in the post-war years that the analytical endeavour was not a rigorously scientific one; and that, in consequence, there was no real justification for the perceived tendency for analysts to dictate to performers in an authoritarian manner.[31] Commentators (some of them performers) began to suggest that the findings of analysts might have only limited use for performers. It is now widely acknowledged that performers and analysts set out to achieve different things:

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[29] I have discussed the pedagogue David Barnett's endorsement of analysis in general and Schenker in particular. (David Barnett, *The Performance of Music: a Study in terms of the Pianoforte* (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1972): see chapter one, **Review: (1) Pedagogy meets Performance Theory** above). It is a heartfelt yet shallow appropriation. As a further example of a performer's views on analysis and its importance, the comments of Artur Schnabel are of interest. See 'Interpretation of Character and Structure', in Konrad Wolff, *Schnabel's Interpretation of Piano Music* (London: Faber, 1972, second edition 1979), ch. 10, 'Interpretation of Character and Structure', p.120-153, especially the summary on p.127-8. Jennifer Chee Yee Tong's PhD thesis 'Separate Discourses: a Study of Performance and Analysis' (University of Southampton, 1995) elaborates on this cleft between rhetoric and reality and includes a discussion of Schnabel's views (p.138 and following).

[30] There are a number of useful discussions of analysis in Cook and Everist, *Rethinking Music*, especially the chapters by Jim Samson, 'Analysis in Context' and Nicholas Cook himself, 'Analysing Performance and Performing Analysis'. Further thoughts on this topic are provided by Roger Scruton in *The Aesthetics of Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), chapter 13, p.393-437. He points to the role of analysis in music perception and music criticism as well as to what I label 'pure' analysis below, commenting that '[a]nalysis attempts to build a bridge from the sound structure to the aesthetic experience'. (p.396)

[31] For example, see John Rink's review of Wallace Berry's *Musical Structure and Performance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989) in *Music Analysis*, 9 (1990), 319-339. Nicholas Cook's essay 'Analysing Performance, Performing Analysis' in Cook and Everist, *Rethinking Music*, p.239-

performers produce a continuous sounding version of a work on a particular occasion and analysts a schematic document. (Nicholas Cook has. as we saw in the last chapter, gone one stage further and declared that analysis itself is a type of performance, reversing the direction of dependence.) What is analysed is itself a 'schematic structure'.[32] The invariant patterns which constitute structure are, in a sense, atemporal, independent of the flow of time. Against this, the performer's interpretation manifests itself as a stream of nuance within or through which the structure is heard. In the meantime, a whole new school of analysis has been emerging, taking recordings of performances as their material and searching for correspondences between 'deep' structure (or salience, at least) and nuance.[33] I will return to this opposition between structural shape and temporal flow presently.

All of this leaves the question of how analysis relates to a performer's interpretation wide open. How, if at all, do they bear on each other? To reiterate: if we take the broad, dictionary definition above as a guide, performers can hardly avoid doing something like 'analysis' (and its contrary, 'synthesis'), and doing it often. This very general, inclusive view of analysis comes close to a notion of perception (the interface between analysis and perception being another problematic area).[34] The opposite perspective is no more enlightening: research has shown that the analyses – so-called – performers such as Alfred Brendel have produced for publication lack the rigour and density of the professional music-analytical product.[35] If, on the other hand, we consult books on instrumental

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261, contains a large number of relevant references for the field of performance and analysis. See especially footnote 1, p.239.

[32] Jim Samson, 'Analysis in Context', p.44.

[33] Eric Clarke's work, as for example reported in 'Expression in performance: generativity, perception and semiosis' in *The Practice of Performance: Studies in Musical Interpretation*, ed. John Rink (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p.21-53, provides a distinguished example.

[34] There is a traditional hierarchy of sensation, perception and cognition, which reflects the motion of information from the environment to the individual. Presumably analysis is a cognitive act. For further thoughts on analysis and perception, see Nicholas Cook, 'Perception: A Perspective from Music Theory' in *Musical Perceptions,* eds. R. Aiello and J. Sloboda (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p.64-95; and a recent article by Ian Cross in *Music Analysis,* 17 (1998), 3-20, entitled 'Music Analysis and Music Perception', which also contains a useful bibliography on this topic.

[35] Jennifer Tong discusses this in detail in chapter 4 (p.127-164) of her thesis 'Separate Discourses'.

pedagogy, we will be struck how few direct references there are to musical analysis.[36]

Clearly we need to examine the process of performance preparation afresh and I suggest while doing so we engage and elaborate on what I think turns out to be a useful distinction implied at the outset of this discussion between 'pure/technical' and 'applied/general' analysis. So by 'pure' I will mean two things: analysis as an end-in-itself, where the analysis is the final product, a storable representation; and, secondly, analysis as a special kind of knowledge about a piece of music, normally referring to knowledge of musical structure. Applied analysis is, in contrast, an ad-hoc activity undertaken in order to achieve some other end – such as performance – and is provisional, partial and unpreserved. In all likelihood it will link structural factors to other mental representations of music implicated in performance technique (such as the range of movements involved). Such analysis may be a barely conscious activity, informed by intuitions, almost continuous with perception, an acquired set of sense-making skills which we only reflect on when they are in danger of failing.

A second related point is one that Jim Samson gives some space to. 'Pure' analysis, a relatively young sub-discipline of academic music, has in its short life developed into a separate practice, a 'coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity' (in Macintyre's words[37]) with a distinctive history, protective institutions, stable standards of excellence and a pedagogy of its own.[38] In this technical sense, both pure 'music analysis' and 'art music

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[36] A study which bridges the gap between 'schematic' analysis and approaches more suited to performance i.e. with a more processual perspective is Jürgen Uhde and Renate Wieland, *Denken und Spielen: Studien zu einer Theorie der musikalischen Darstellung* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1988). This ambitious work includes extended discussions of the shaping of musical time, the nature of expression and its relationship to musical structure and character, the performer's 'inner programme' and sound/texture. The text is clothed in an Adornian metaphysics (it draws on Adorno's unpublished notes on performance theory). There are numerous musical references; many analyses tackle the process/product barrier by deriving an overall framework of nuance from motivic/thematic workings (for example in the section on the 'inner programme', p.415-454).

[37] Alasdair Macintyre, *After Virtue* (London: Duckworth 1981; second edition 1985), p.187.

[38] Notable pedagogic texts on musical analysis include Nicholas Cook, *A Guide to Musical Analysis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987) and Jonathan Dunsby and Arnold Whittall, *Music Analysis in Theory and Practice* (London: Faber, 1988), both of which contain useful suggestions for further reading. Nowadays university music courses in the U.K are likely to contain an analysis option which will take students through tried and tested approaches. There is a well-established journal for

performance' nowadays can claim to fulfil these conditions. but to a significant degree they have done so in isolation from each other. It is this branching (or fragmentation) of musical sub-disciplines that has made possible the recent conflict concerning the responsibilities of performer and analyst, exacerbated by formerly widely held positivist views to the effect that analysis was a scientific, performance a pragmatic, endeavour.

In the following sections I will be looking at the way in which performers prepare their interpretations within different time frames.

Analysis into Performance: (1) Initiation into the Practice

One way we might describe the putative analysis-interpretation-performance interaction is by examining the way we acquire musicianship skills (a topic which will receive more extended attention in the following chapter). It seems that musicologists have tended to favour investigations of the creative process at the expense of the re-creative (which is very much in line with the emphasis on composition rather than more 'peripheral' materials connected with music's production and reception).[39] It has been left to music psychologists to describe the acquisition of musical competence, which they have typically linked to developmental psychology.[40] I will make no such direct link between the levels of sophistication I propose in what follows and the relative maturity of the aspiring

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music analysts and a round of conferences at national and international level pursuing analytical issues.

[39] So a great deal of scholarly effort has gone into the elucidation of compositional sketches (Beethoven's for example). At the same time, the thoughts of performers about their art have tended to invite patronising or even dismissive comment. Dunsby points this out in reference to comments by Joseph Kerman on this topic, in *Performing Music: Shared Concerns*, p.47. Kerman's comments, and his claim that performers are 'doers' not 'talkers' is to be found in *Musicology* (London: Fontana, 1985), p.196.

[40] What I say here leans heavily on their models. Two important sources on this topic are 'The Development of Artistic and Musical Competence' by David Hargreaves, collected in *Musical Beginnings: Origins and Development of Musical Competence*, eds. Irène Deliège and John Sloboda (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p.145-168; and 'Environmental Factors in the Development of Musical Performance Skill over the Life Span', by J. W. Davidson, M .J. A. Howe and J. Sloboda, in *The Social Psychology of Music,* eds. D. J. Hargreaves and A. C. North (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p.188-203. Sloboda's earlier book, *The Musical Mind* also contains a chapter on this theme (entitled 'Musical Learning and Development' p.194-238).

musician, though there is bound to be a strong correlation between them. I suggest we think of the process of initiation into the practice as traversing three levels:

1. Basic Musical Literacy. This covers the ability to decode notation. Whatever the arguments among teachers may be as to how and when exactly music reading skills should be introduced, they are high on the list of priorities and their acquisition will almost certainly occur early in the learning process. At the most fundamental level, identifying musical structure amounts to no more than identifying construction materials: the note, its pitch and length. But building meaningful music out of reified tones involves coordinating a basic pre-structural (literal) decoding with both an emerging sense of how notes fit together into larger structural units and the technique to turn them into sounds.[41] To achieve this, instrumental teachers overseeing the learning process will characteristically stress the primacy of musical imagination (by which I mean the pupil's ability to imagine and retain notated sounds in her 'inner ear') over their mechanical (technical) realisation. The powers of imagination should ideally determine the outcome, and not the weakness of the flesh. Pupils are shown how to bridge the gap between notation and its realisation, for example by being encouraged to imagine sounds in terms of the rhythms and stresses of language – primarily through song – or gesture (dance). The analytical division of what is notated into meaningful units, on the linguistic model of word, phrase, sentence, paragraph etc. is a precondition of effective practice and, artistically, of meaningful synthesis, or the creation of plausible, coherent *processual continuity.*

2. Stylistic Awareness. As a pupil's repertoire grows, works come to be grouped by common features, such as composer, genre, epoch, form, mood, texture, etc. There is no particular analytical moment that can be isolated from the classification process, but rather a sequence of more or less memorable analytical encounters

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[41] Schnabel distinguished between three levels of analysis: analysis of the structure of units, the partitioning of the music into phrases and sections and the individual peculiarities of the work. Wolff, *Schnabel's Interpretation of Piano Music,* p.127-8.

with individual works,[42] framed within an ongoing dialogue with other representatives of the practice (or what have been called 'significant others': above all the instrumental teacher, but also peers[43]). Out of this each pupil builds up a kind of database of many different kinds of knowledge, including the analytical, which gradually enables her to achieve independence. The key association here is thus between the meaning expressed in performance and a background of genre indications. At the same time, a general awareness grows of music's potential to take on multiple meanings, of which structure is but one (important) example.

3. Interpretative Competence. This is the ultimate goal of all performers. Here individual works of artistic merit (as opposed to functional pedagogic study material) are problematised against a background of levels (1) and (2). Gaps which remain at these levels are slowly filled in. The demands of each individual work, its excesses, peculiarities, divergencies, anomalies – the facts of its particularity – are scrutinised in detail. After all, the performer cannot refer outside the work in the process of performing it. Thought of in terms of perceivable layers of meaning, a performance contains an interpretation, which in turn may possibly contain a formal analysis. While we can hope, even expect, to be able to separate out the 'accidental' (mistakes) and performance-specific from a consistent interpretation, the shadow of an analysis behind the interpretation is so faint as to be barely perceptible, as much an imaginative creation of the listener as a fact about the sounds of the music. To put it another way: it may well that the performer makes use of a formal analytical technique at this level, but a performance will never be conclusive evidence of this.[44]

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[42] Jim Samson uses the term 'analytical moments', which he attributes to Ian Bent, to describe early precursors of what I have in mind here. 'Analysis in Context', p.39.
[43] See Davidson et al., 'Environmental factors in the development of musical performance skill over the lifespan', especially p.197-203.
[44] Consider the pianist Murray Perahia's by now well-known enthusiasm for Schenkerian analysis: can one in all seriousness claim to hear the analysis out of his performances, or the recordings?

These three levels overlaps and emerge out of each other. The third represents the kind of maturity and autonomy we expect expert adult performers to possess.[45]

In deciding where, and how conscious, the analytical act is, we might usefully borrow a distinction from language pedagogy between *acquisition* and *learning*.[46] The former term has been used to describe language behaviour individuals take on board with no conscious filtering attention to form. Children are said to acquire speaking and listening skills in their first language: in contrast, they have to learn how to read and write. Perhaps some music analytical skill may be acquired rather than learned. Even supposing that all analytical acts were initially conscious, it is clear that analytical knowledge subsequently recedes below the threshold of consciousness.[47] Both of these factors contribute to what John Rink has called 'informed intuition', something performers seem to rely on heavily.[48]

Analysis into Performance: (2) Preparing a Work for Performance

Preparing a piece for performance is not quite the same thing as preparing an interpretation, because interpretations exist at a level which transcends the individual performance occasion. Performers have finite resources in real life and any particular occasion will in all likelihood have been compromised, viewed by the performer as less than ideal. Nonetheless, there are, I would claim, preferred ways of going about creating an interpretation, though on the surface, it is the

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[45] For a categorisation of levels of performance expertise, see R. T. Krampe and K. Anders Ericsson, 'Deliberate practice and elite musical performance' in Rink, *The Practice of Performance*, p.84-102.

[46] The distinction between learning and acquisition is discussed in N. Lightbourn and N. Spada, *How Languages are Learned* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), chapter 2. Of particular interest here is the work of Stephen Krashen, who claims a pre-eminent role for acquisition.

[47] Music psychologists refer to the phenomenon of 'chunking'. A different way of thinking of this would be in the distinction between procedural and declarative knowledge ('knowing how' and 'knowing that'): a musical interpretation is the gradual transmutation of procedural into declarative knowledge, a further instance of the dialectic of process and product. I have referred to this elsewhere as 'cumulative fixation'. It has both a historical and individual aspect (i.e. ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny, in Ernst Haekel's famous phrase).

[48] John Rink discusses 'informed intuition' in his review of Wallace Berry's *Musical Structure and Performance* and in 'Authentic Chopin: history, analysis and intuition in performance', in Rink and Samson, *Chopin Studies 2*, p.214-244.

differences rather than the similarities which stand out in descriptions of how performers practise.[49] Our interest here is in establishing how exactly analysis fits into the preparatory phase.

Where conditions are favourable, performance preparation will tend to organise itself in predictable ways, with strong cyclic and sequential (linear) elements. I will begin with an example of a cyclic element, because it makes clear how important modified repetition is at the moment-to-moment level when practising. The German cellist Gerhard Mantel has developed what he calls (in my translation) 'the principle of cyclic attention' (das Prinzip der rotierenden Aufmerksamkeit).[50] Mantel describes a method of practising the smallest fragments of music: 'gestalts' of a few tones, which can be thought of as the smallest units which entail interpretation, as at the level of the single note, interpretation threatens to dissolve into pure technique, just as, in parallel, music collapses into sounds, critical interpretation into perception and structuralism into literalism. In essence, the idea is to work on these tiny gestalts in a variety of different ways, paying attention to different musical parameters each time. If this process is successful, the interpreter-performer gradually gains control of the material to an extent which allows ever more fresh interpretative choices to be made. A cycle, or feedback loop, is established, with the successfully practised materials constantly bedding down and built upon. This is the fertile soil from which 'informed intuitions' spring.

Practice, of course, consists largely of modified repetition. The model I turn to now contextualises this in a phased, linear macro-model of performance preparation. The German music psychologist Wilfried Ribke distinguishes phases of orientation, text decoding, partitioning for practice purposes, practising and

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[49] The very varied descriptions given by pianists in David Dubal's interview collection, *The World of the Concert Pianist: Conversations with 35 Internationally Recognised Pianists* (London: Victor Gollanscz, 1985) are evidence of this. See also *Pianists on Playing: Interviews with 12 Concert Pianists*, ed. Linda J. Doyle (New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, 1987); and Elyse Mach, *Great Contemporary Pianists Speak for Themselves*, volumes 1 and 2 (New York: Dover, 1991).

[50] A full statement of Gerhard Mantel's theory of how to practise is contained in *Cello üben: Eine Methodik des Übens nicht nur für Streicher* (Mainz: Schott, 1987, revised and updated edition 1999). I refer here to the 1999 edition. The 'principle of cyclic attention' is discussed on p.171-4.

memorising and, finally, manufacturing hierarchies and integration of elements.[51] It may not be clear how much of the sequencing in his model is (prescriptive) idealisation, remote from praxis; but it is surely clear that many of the elements in this scheme cannot be transposed randomly. Analysis is not mentioned explicitly in his scheme either; but the scheme confirms that a key analytical moment occurs when the performer makes decisions about how to carve up the text into manageable practice units. It would be too much to claim that this act of partitioning is a necessary (let alone sufficient) condition of interpretation; on the other hand, it is difficult to imagine a situation where it does not play a decisive role.[52]

By way of interim summary, we might contrast two underlying conceptions of unity cherished by analyst and performer. (Here I admit to expedient oversimplification, as analysts today are increasingly willing to question the

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[51] Wilfried Ribke, 'Üben', in *Musikpsychologie: ein Handbuch,* eds. Herbert Bruhn, Rolf Oerter and Helmut Rősing (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1993), p.546-558 (p.553). I have also seen a similar model outlined by Jürgen Uhde in an article entitled 'Eine Theorie des Übens am Klavier' though I have been unable to locate the source of this. He proposes a five stage model as follows: 1. Orientierung. 2. Einrichten. 3. Lernen. 4. Einspielen. 5. Darstellen. (These translate roughly as: orientation, technical organisation, learning, memorising, performing.)

[52] To cite an instance where it apparently did not occur, Glenn Gould claims to have prepared for one of his last recordings – of the Brahms Op.10 Ballades – by simply playing the four pieces through (twice over) on a number of occasions. Interpretative decisions were taken in the interim between practice sessions. I think there is ample reason to doubt Gould's self-reporting: his ideological agenda here and elsewhere is to suggest that music is a mental abstraction rather than a sensual product; and the suggestion that he did not *need* to practise, so complete was his keyboard control, all too obviously serves a mystique of genius (and feeds his vanity). We should also note that the interpretation Gould was preparing here was for a *recording*, not a performance. (See Michael Stegemann, *Glenn Gould, Leben und Werk* (Munich: Piper, 1996) p.386-7.) Add to this Gould's mastery of cutting techniques in the recording studio and his championing of them as legitimate means to create the desired (interpretative, performative) effect, and his claims perhaps seem more sustainable. Incidentally, Gould's comments on how to play the piano are equally absurd (as Edward Said notes, in *Musical Elaborations* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1991) p.30), amounting to a statement of how little there is to know about it. Match these comments against the difficulties he is reported to have had with his technique in the mid 1970s (in the aftermath of his mother's death) and one realises how much of a front this is. Gould's technical problems are discussed in Peter Oswald, *Glenn Gould: the Ecstacy and Tragedy of Genius* (New York: Norton, 1997), p.298-307. Also relevant here is the famous story of Gould's 'vacuum cleaner epiphany' (where he claims to have resolved a technical problem in the last movement of Beethoven's Op.109 sonata by practising with the vacuum cleaner on, so as to render the sounds he made inaudible, freeing him to 'imagine' the music more clearly in his head). This is reported in Oswald, *Glenn Gould,* p.76-78.

Not all public performance involves the physical familiarity with the work that John Sloboda describes as 'floating' (*The Musical Mind*, p.96.) I have commented on this in footnote 27 above.

concept of unity and its relevance to the analytic endeavour.[53]) The former is concerned with notions of structural unity: conventionally, analyses are spatial objects, derived from a schematic, spatial notation of the work. Even in those cases where the performance process is under investigation, the resultant analyses are presented in graphic -- i.e. spatial – form. The performer's notion of unity has one minimal condition: that the work sound from beginning to end without interruption. Unlike the analyst, the performer is obliged to reproduce every detail of the piece. I have already described what the performer hopes to achieve more positively as the creation of an at least plausible, at best persuasively coherent processual continuity. What does he have to add to achieve this? Where does `structure` end in a performance, and what else comes into play?

Structural and Non-Structural Features of Music

A rough distinction is commonly made between those elements of music which are structural – pitch and rhythm – and those which are not. Diana Raffman provides a sharpened version.[54] Her arguments make extensive use of the notion of 'ineffability', which she employs to mark a cut-off point between that which counts as knowledge (the 'effable') and that which is available to perception but beyond description. Structural features of music, she claims, 'constitute a system of elements whose tokens are (1) discrete, (2) type-identifiable by some finite mechanical procedure, and (3) combinable in certain rule-governed ways'.[55] Non-structural features of music include dynamics, tempo and timbre. On closer inspection it turns out that pitch and rhythm are not wholly independent of these non-structural features. Their interaction is complex: pitch and rhythm have a dual character as type-abstractions and nuanced particulars. In other words, a particular heard example of a pitch or rhythm always exhibits the non-structural features of dynamic, tempo and timbre as well. We always encounter nuanced versions of an

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[53] See for example Fred Everett Maus, 'Concepts of Musical Unity', in eds. Cook and Everist, *Rethinking Music*, p.171-192.
[54] Diana Raffman, *Language, Music, and Mind* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT press, 1993).
[55] Raffman, *Language, Music, and Mind*, p.25.

ideal type. In order for us to perceive particular instances of pitch or rhythm as exemplars of a type, we must have a mental representation of the *typical* pitch or rhythm of which the performed particular is an example. A process – perceived sound – is matched against a product – the mental representation, which functions as a psychological 'go-between'.[56]

Although it entails it, I have argued that structuralism is not quite the same thing as literalism. When we think of structure, we tend to think not of individual notes, but of a hierarchy of abstractions derived from note groups: pitch/rhythm complexes, such as motivic cells, or progressively larger units, such as phrases or formal sections (recapitulations, episodes, etc.). In an interesting extension of her argument, Raffman speculates on the reasons why objective structures seem to be compatible with subjective interpretations. Where simple structures can in principle be exhaustively described, heard and reconstituted by a listener – this is a condition of calling them structures – at a higher level (i.e. over longer time spans) an interpretative gap opens up and 'subjective' descriptions of structure become possible. It is this fact that makes interpretation possible. As I understand Raffman, she is claiming that the number of plausible coherent structural descriptions at the global level increases to a point beyond which the individual can meaningfully adjudicate. No individual, in other words, can weigh up the structural options adequately, especially in the moment of listening. Individual listeners are also likely to be inconsistent about how they parse the music on different occasions. Raffman provides a number of reasons why this seems to be so, of which musical aptitude and training rank high. The process of real-time listening is necessarily influenced by all manner of particularities, such as the nuances of the performance you are hearing, or the number of times you have heard the work before. Raffman describes this phenomenon as 'structural ineffability'.[57]

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[56] Ibid, p.68 for her description of interval schemas as 'go-betweens'.

[57] Structural ineffability is discussed in Raffman, *Language, Music and Mind*, chapter 2, especially p.27-35. I am not absolutely convinced that what she is describing here is a unitary phenomenon: I take her point that 'ineffable' structural mysteries can sometimes be solved through introspection or with help. But isn't what she says just evidence of structural ambiguity? To call it ineffability makes it sound as if there is always a decisively better description of structure to be had. This is a point that Stephen Davies's careful review (*Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 52: 1994, p.360-362) does

Important research in the field of music psychology has established that there is significant correlation between certain notions of structure and nuance in contemporary performance practice. Eric Clarke calls this correlation 'iconic'.[58] For example, cadences and phrase boundaries in tonal music provoke predictable deviations. Motivic and thematic units are generally presented consistently, with the same articulation and phrasing. At a certain level of complexity and scale, the correlation can be called into question, however. Music psychologists can in any case only deal in statistical regularities, rather than unique artistry. To put it another way, performers do not so much establish causes for their interpretations as find reasons.[59]

Notation and Nuance

Let us assume that the notation of pitch and rhythm in the text is complete (a rare enough case, to be sure: consider the matter of ornamentation). A performative interpretation, whatever its relationship to structure, manifests itself otherwise largely as an assembly of nuances. This manifestation is, of course, the performance: it is the only evidence we have that a mental representation exists. Because the performer's contribution apparently consists of nothing more than nuance, performing has traditionally been seen as a 'recreative' – and hence 'uncreative' – activity. Nuance is fine detail of sound reflecting fine precision of movement, identifiable as such only as a variation on an ideal. At some point it becomes only perceptible, beyond description (it can only be indicated ostensively); then it shades into the imperceptible, or following Raffman, becomes

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not take up, though he does draw attention to a further symptom of the same problem – call it a tendency to idealise – in Raffman's rather narrow view of what counts as music.

[58] The term is employed in the semiotician C. S. Peirce's sense (to contrast with indixical or symbolic relationships). See Eric Clarke, 'Expression in Performance: generativity, perception and semiosis', in ed. Rink, *The Practice of Performance,* p.21-54, especially p.27.

[59] John Sloboda discusses these matters in *The Musical Mind*, chapter 3, 'The Performance of Music'. See also Eric Clarke's overview 'Generative Principles in Music Performance' in ed. John Sloboda, *Generative Processes in Music: the Psychology of Performance, Improvisation, and Composition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p.1-26; and Clarke's essay 'Expression in performance: generativity, perception and semiosis', which contains two detailed analyses. Clarke makes the point about the limits of the music psychological endeavour on p.52.

'ineffable'. Nuances are classifiable in terms of rhythm and/or dynamics. including agogics and rubato (rhythm); articulation (rhythmic and dynamic): and textural matters such as chord balancing and tone colour. Tempo is a higher order organising factor. How far are these factors visible in notation?

Although it need not do, and has not always done so, musical notation often goes beyond a simple representation of the 'primary' structural elements of pitch plus rhythm to include 'secondary' indications of how they should be realised. Indications of how to handle nuance – or how to 'express' the music – include tempo and character indications and dynamic markings. At one end of the scale there are titles, at the other markings which qualify individual notes, or processes within them (fermata, crescendi etc.). Some of these are verbal, others 'iconic' (such as hairpin dynamics), others 'causal', or in Peircian terms 'indexical' (like fingerings). The question as to which elements are mandatory, which optional is the stuff of interpretative argument. (Repeat marks are a good example.) In other words, notation is actually a mixture of different systems, with elements of binary code sitting alongside poetic allusion. Some writers distinguish between prescriptive and descriptive elements, though it is rather difficult to draw the line clearly here. This implies a distinction between an instruction and a description. But what exactly is it? The answer can hardly avoid the moral terrain. Are a composer's indications of fingering 'prescriptive'? It might seem so. Yet fingerings depends so much on individual anatomy that they can hardly be taken as mandatory.[60]

Of course, we can observe a broad tendency in recent compositional history towards ever greater specificity (though individual composers vary greatly in their notational precision). By 1900, the notation of nuance has achieved a level of almost whimsical over-definition in the practice of some composers (Debussy provides good examples). Attempts by pedagogues to specify details of articulation can also lead to absurdly overloaded texts, which, if taken 'literally', would simply

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[60] A brief discussion of the functions and characteristics of Western notation is to be found in Nicholas Cook, *Music: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), chapter 4, 'An Imaginary Object' (p.54-74). See also Roy Howat, 'What do we perform?', in ed. Rink, *The Practice of Performance*, p.3-20, especially p.7 on 'prescriptive' and 'descriptive' notation.

generate robotic performances of a slightly fussier kind than the unadorned version of the score.[61] By the time we reach the middle of the twentieth century, notation has become the subject of experiment in its own right, as my comments on Ferneyhough and his contemporaries above suggest. They have moved well beyond an implicit notion of notation as a performance aid – in principle maximally transparent – to something which commands attention in itself.[62]

Nuance and Spontaneity

I would like now to pursue the topic of nuance and 'nuance ineffability' a stage further, to demonstrate how it links in with a performance issue I have already touched upon. My question is this: why is it that we value spontaneity in a performance of a musical work? Or rather, why is it that the *illusion* of spontaneity is so important?[63]

This time I would like to illustrate the problem with a brief anecdote. Although this is a personal recollection, I am sure the principle it purports to demonstrate will be familiar to most seasoned concert-goers. Late in October 1998, I saw the pianist Anne Queffelec perform Ravel's Miroirs live in a BBC lunchtime concert. Her interpretation of the fourth piece in the cycle, Alborada del Grazioso, contained an idiosyncratic moment: there is a passage in 9/8 which breaks down metrically into a 6/8 segment stressed on the first, third and fifth quaver, followed by a 3/8 fragment (see bar 33). In other words, there is a hemiola effect. The repeated note figure in the first half of the bar is an unmistakable imitation of flamenco castanets. Queffelec introduced a 'Luftpause' at the end of the bar,

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[61] For an example of detailed notation of articulation, see Paul Badura-Skoda's annotated version of the Prelude and Fugue in E flat minor/D sharp minor (WTK, Book 1), in *Interpreting Bach at the Keyboard* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p.228-242. In this connection, one might also examine Webern's annotated version of his piano Variations, op.27, which contain unambiguously 'mental' abstractions (such as crescendi through rests): one can see the seeds of Ferneyhough's experiments with interpretation here.

[62] Musical notation has not always restricted itself to this single function by any means, of course. See Stanley Boorman, 'The Musical Text' in Cook and Everist, *Rethinking Music*, p.403-423, especially p.405-414.

[63] I have already touched on this subject briefly. See chapter two, **Case Studies in Performance Virtue: (1) Performance from Memory**.

effectively turning it into 10/8. Having heard the piece many times. I had no difficulty 'reading' this interpretative moment as positively expressive. I visualised the flamenco pirouetting figure momentarily frozen in mid air while the D7/13 chord resounded. It was as if the 'dancer' was briefly displaying herself in a moment of theatrical poise. This gesture is repeated on numerous occasions within the piece and each time Queffelec treated it similarly.[64] It was a striking effect, plausibly rendered. A few weeks later, I noticed that Radio 3 were to broadcast Queffelec playing the same pieces and decided to make a special effort to hear once again what I had thought to be outstanding playing. Though the playing was somehow less accurate than I recollected, in all other respects it lived up to my memory of it and Alborada del Grazioso had precisely the same idiosyncratic agogics. However, I established at the end of the broadcast that this had been quite another performance occasion (a recital given sometime earlier in Ireland). In an eerie double-take, the unique sense of occasion I associated with the live performance evaporated: what had seemed at the time to emerge seamlessly out of the musical flow now became nothing more than a distorting mannerism. Viewed as a piece of performative interpretation, it was of course effectively inaudible to anyone unfamiliar with the score. Indeed, Queffelec's internalised performative interpretation had become so automatic that from my point of view, it had ceased to be perceived by her as an interpretation as such, and had become fused with the text. What I had taken to be just for us, unique to the occasion, turned out to be mechanical, a calculation, a ploy.

As we have seen, a processual conception of performance requires a concrete space/time context: everything that happens is unique in the sense that it has unique space/time coordinates. To turn a performance into some form of storage – to reify it – is to attempt to preserve its identity as completely as possible. Above I referred to such stored forms as representations, of which notated texts,

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[64] If one compares all the different notated versions of this passage, it becomes apparent that the hemiola termination is one of a pair of continuations. In the other one, the melodic line is not left hanging, but dissolves into glissando figures. (e.g. bars 43-44). Queffelec's interpretation threatens to destroy the rhythmic contrast between them. Incidentally, the BBC lunchtime concert was given in St. George's, Brandon Hill on Thursday, October 29, 1998 and the live broadcast of the recital from Ireland I refer to below was on November 21, 1998.

recordings and mental representations – i.e. interpretations – are the chief varieties in the musical world. An interpretation therefore comes into existence in a sort of interactive performance space in which the audience, the concert hall, the acoustic and so on all have an effect, however minimal, on the result. So the interpretation itself may be highly determined, but nonetheless displays a certain flexibility.

Consider what our impression would be if this were not the case. We would know in advance exactly what the outcome of the performance would be, so there would be no particular reason to listen closely on this occasion (or any other) because all performances of the work by that performer would be the same, anytime, anywhere. There would also be no way for the performer to convey any sense of commitment on any particular occasion, as the interpretation would be completely fixed in advance. This loss of commitment is a justification for the moral argument for live performance over recorded music. The commitment is both to the work and the occasion, and those present at it. As such it is an indicator of trust and trustworthiness. The completely predetermined performance would be an automated, mechanical rendering, independent of context. What I am describing is something like what a recording has come to be.

In practice, an interpretation is prepared in detail in advance, but it is not possible to achieve total interpretative fixity. Nor does the mind store information digitally, in the manner of CD recordings. And as the Queffelec example shows, there is the danger of our perceiving a performance as mechanical and therefore sterile if we are not convinced that what is happening is uniquely tied to the here and now of the occasion. Here Diana Raffman's concept of nuance ineffability provides a psychological account of a moral necessity. The uniqueness of every percept only makes sense when measured against a background of mental schemata (which we can verbalise). There is an uneasy margin in which we can sense minimal differences in nuance but cannot report them. (In marginal cases differences can only be pointed to ostensively.) We can distinguish nuance from structure (for example, we normally know which class an interval belongs to, regardless of whether it is played in tune or not, and the same principle applies to

the classification of rhythmic cells); but there is a point at which nuance is perceived but is no longer reliably classifiable.

What makes 'live' performance spontaneous is the way in which each moment in the performance process depends on what precedes it. There is that sense of seamless emergence we have about any human behaviour we are confronted with and interact with socially: above and beyond planned intention, we interpret each moment in a stream of behaviour as being caused or modified by what came immediately before. The more context causes behaviour, the more it appears 'improvised'. The more it modifies it, the greater the evidence of a preformed intention, or in the musical case, performative interpretation. In just this way the plausibility of a performative interpretation relies on context. For example, the basic tempo of a performance may depend in part on the acoustic of the concert hall. Details of pedalling, dynamics and agogics will all require some fine-tuning (or 'running repairs') as the performance proceeds.

Danuser points out that the notion of 'an' interpretation of a work, rather than interpretation-as-spontaneous-process is a historical one. The distinction also has a purely logical dimension, as Levinson makes clear. In part, it is a matter of degree: the extremes of complete predetermination and total spontaneity are logically impossible. We can also think of this in terms of Goehr's dialectic of performance practices. Those pianists who foreground the uniqueness of the occasion – those who favour the perfect musical performance – will naturally stress flexibility. If the sense of occasion is to play a greater role, their preparation must take the form of meeting eventualities. They will specialise in spontaneity. Their practice will be of adaptive, interactive strategies and tactics rather than of a fixed representation of the work. Such an approach to performance was suited to a time when concert conditions were less standardised than they have become today. Here we might contrast the approach of Gould, whose felt that his desire to design an interpretation was compromised by the vicissitudes of the live performance occasion; and Shura Cherkassky: his extraordinary spontaneity made each performance a unique instance of an interpretative manner which reached back to the late nineteenth century in many respects, including his choice of works, his

habit of 'preluding' (improvising modulating arpeggiated chords before and between works), as well as his grand 'romantic' keyboard manner.[65] For earlier generations, Busoni and Schnabel theorised the middle ground in different ways.[66] Where Gould created interpretations on record, completely bypassing the concept of performance, Cherkassky, especially in his last years, has left us numerous recordings of performances which are effectively identical with their interpretations. For Gould, performance was fraught with risk, for Cherkassky a singular opportunity.

Although my account does not focus on it, this important historical dimension should not be overlooked. What I called 'cumulative fixation' in interpretation issues in an extreme situation (to echo Said's description) in which the performing pianist, playing in the highly regulated, largely standardised environment of the late twentieth-century art music concert hall, can project a highly determined personal interpretation of the music in which almost the only unpredictable element is his own body. What is extreme is indeed the social isolation of the performer; and this reflects a striving for an ultimately unachievable ontological purity in the (re)presentation of the musical work as an object.

The Musical Metaphor of Space and Movement

I return now to the relationship of performance to analysis. Is there a fundamental level at which performer and analyst converge in their understanding of musical unity? If we take Roger Scruton's ideas as a starting point, it is arguable

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[65] I heard him perform in Frankfurt (Neue Rundfunksaal) in the early 1990s. The opening of the Schumann op.17 Fantasie flowed seamlessly – and to my modern ears utterly disconcertingly – out of a series of improvisatory arpeggios. The programme ended with a bundle of late nineteenth-century transcriptions and virtuoso pieces. One of the (half a dozen) encores was Tchaikovsky's lyric piece 'October' from 'The Seasons', in which the dynamic contrast between melody and accompaniment was daringly exaggerated, the phrasing so expansive that the piece practically came to a halt at several points.

[66] Of course Gould was considerably influenced by Schnabel. Schnabel's attitude to the performance occasion was to neutralise it, by emphasising a quasi-spiritual timelessness. One can read Gould's attitude to performance as confronting the impossibility of an idealist-inspired perfection in a mundane concert setting. Busoni's earlier theorising makes some striking paradoxical claims about both the nature of compositional genesis and performance.

that there is. He quotes Nicholas Cook's definition of a musical culture as 'a tradition of imagining sound as music'.[67] One thing that distinguishes sounds from music in our culture is a willingness and ability to employ the spatial metaphor. In doing so we hear sounds as connected and contextually relevant to each other. Most of us do this for the most part unthinkingly: indeed, many would probably doubt the *metaphorical* nature of musical space, so ingrained is this mode of understanding. Language itself, with its word classes of noun and verb, reinforces and through its very familiarity conceals the interpenetration of product and process, for which the metaphor of space and movement provides a further instance. In fact, the metaphor turns out to be complex: there is an illusory sense of movement within an illusory space, the 'gestures' of the music constituting its 'character'. So we might say that whereas analysts are interested in mapping locations and paths through musical space, performers (and listeners) undertake actual journeys. Interpretations are a class of preferred routes.

As an initial example of the pervasiveness of the spatial metaphor, drawn from the literature of performance pedagogy, consider Schnabel's approach to melodic analysis. He distinguishes between two types of melodic articulation, with one mode complementing the other: one type of analysis depends on an 'orientation note', around which the rest of the phrase is organised (this can be the initiating tone or 'point of departure'; a climactic note or 'centre of gravity'; and a 'final goal', or destination); the other examines the shape (rise and fall) of the line. If the latter describes a melodic 'space', the former stresses movement within it.[68]

The dialectic between product (object, event…) and process is equally visible across the range of analytical techniques commonly employed. Within analysis itself two tendencies can be discerned: those theorists who identify events (such as motives, or themes) and relate them to each other; and those who subordinate surface detail to descriptions of underlying processes, such as the goal-directedness of tonality. Réti is an example of the former, Schenker of the latter.

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[67] Cook, *Music, Imagination and Culture*, p.223. Roger Scruton talks about the role of metaphor in understanding music in *The Aesthetics of Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) in chapters 1 and 3. See, for example, p.94-5. The quotation from Cook is found on p.455.

Events can of course be organised into transformation processes, just as processes need the materials events provide. Larger events (climaxes, episodes, transitions) can invite interpretation in the form of a narrative, itself essentially a fusion of process and event.[69]

The processual aspect is reflected in a spatial image which recurs in many different forms: the German word 'Tonleiter' means both 'leader' and 'ladder' of tones, combining metaphors of location and movement; Leopold Mozart talked of the 'filo', or 'connecting thread' holding the performance together; nineteenth-century music uses the notion of the 'line' in various ways; the Schenkerian Urlinie and its 'composed out' levels has been an enormously influential in the way many musicians (theorists, performers, analysts) think about music; more recently, performers have thought in terms of an 'intensity curve' shaping the flow of the piece.[70] If there is nuance ineffability, there is also 'nuance dependency'. The sense that a performance belongs in the here and now is generated by the way an performance details have consequences. To describe a performance as fragmentary or incoherent is to point to a failure on the part of the performer to persuade us of a quasi-causal thread holding everything together.

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[68] Schnabel's theories of melodic articulation are to be found in Wolff, S*chnabel's Interpretation of Piano Music*, chapter 4, p.30-41.

[69] From the extensive literature on narrative and music I would single out for mention here some of John Rink's analyses of extended works from the nineteenth-century piano literature, which link different kinds of surface event to underlying tonal and narrative processes. See for example his analysis of Chopin's 3rd Scherzo in 'Authentic Chopin: history, analysis and intuition in performance'. Rink has taken this type of coordinated layered analysis a step further in his 'knowledge structure' for performing Chopin's Nocturne in C sharp minor, Op.27 No.1 (presented in a paper at the Society for Music Analysis (SMA) Study Day in Southampton in October 1998). Here Rink distinguishes between low, mid and high level time scales, listing knowledge types within each level ('Form', 'Tonality' 'Main Tempos', 'Dynamics' and 'Plot' within the high level; 'Pitch essence', 'Rhythmic essence', 'Texture' and 'Character' within the mid level; and 'Articulation' and 'Technique' among the low level factors). See also John Rink, 'Translating Musical Meaning: the Nineteenth-Century Performer as Narrator' in eds. Cook and Everist, *Rethinking Music*, p.217-238.

[70] Leopold Mozart's comments are reported by Paul Badura-Skoda in *Interpreting Bach at the Keyboard*, p.201, at the beginning of Chapter 9 of this book, entitled 'Rendering the Structure as a Whole'. For a further discussion of instances of the metaphor of the 'line', or 'unifying thread', see John Rink, 'Translating Musical Meaning: the Nineteenth-Century Performer as Narrator', p.217-238, especially p.218.

Music and Character

Here I turn to a further instance of the dialectic of process and product, most evident in the pedagogical literature. Many teachers would admit that a performer may well be able to get by without a thoroughgoing knowledge of a work's structure; that a performer would attempt to perform something without having reflected on its character seems improbable. The two terms are linked together explicitly by Schnabel.[71] We should try to separate them.

Structure is objectified pattern in music. It is most easily recognised in notated form. Talk of a work's 'character' points in two directions. Firstly it refers us to its composed character. This is a question of its genre and the positioning of the work within the canon. As genre is understood in part against a stylistic and social background, it is to a limited degree open to reinterpretation.[72] The character of an interpretation or performance – what we might call 'performative character' – obviously depends in part on recognising composed character. This in turn allows the performer to formulate an intention to perform the work in character or against it, to exploit the fluidity built into the genre concept. The more encompassing the genre, the more scope there is for this kind of interpretative strategy. Titled character pieces from Couperin to Debussy allow the performer less freedom than Bach's preludes and fugues, perhaps even the dance movements of the keyboard suites.[73]

To speak of the character of performed music is to employ an animating metaphor (though not necessarily for human animation): the work 'behaves' in a certain way, which is its mode of being, its manner. At the root of this is an acknowledgement that music itself is an intentional concept, the product of human

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[71] Wolff, *Schnabel's Interpretation of Piano Music,* p.120-154.

[72] Further introductory comments on genre theory can be found in Jim Samson, *The Four Ballades* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p.69-72 and in 'Chopin and Genre', *Music Analysis,* 8 (1989), p.213-231.

[73] Stephen Davies discusses this issue from a slightly different perspective, arguing that baroque music allows the performer greater freedom in the choice of tempo on the grounds that more of the music's meaning is contained in the purely structural elements of pitch and rhythm. Stephen Davies, *Musical Meaning and Expression* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), chapter 7 ('Musical Understanding'), especially p.334.

thoughts. Interpretation and performance both mediate and preserve intentions. The metaphor of music as language can play an ancillary 'anthropomorphising' role.[74] Character has a feeling tone equivalent, which we call mood. There is a parallel hierarchy of structures and characters in music: the character of a piece of music emerges out of the sum of its 'gestures', their 'shape' and 'amplitude' (dynamic intensity). This is paralleled at the level of composed character by generic references or 'topics'.[75]

Although a performer is expected to respect composed character, there is obviously considerable flexibility within which composed character is perceived as plausible performative character. The space which interpretation once occupied has narrowed considerably. I will now attempt to illustrate this historical development. Consider Richard Taruskin's comparison of two recordings of Prokofiev's Gavotta, Op.32, No.3. The first was made by Prokofiev himself in 1932, the second much more recently by the Prokofiev 'specialist' Boris Berman.[76] Prokofiev's recording is loaded with nuances which bring out the skittish quality of the dance: there is a parodic element to the composition in any case, and the unexpected harmonic darts and veers invite a certain exaggeration. Berman's painstakingly literal approach to the text leads him to neutralise the piquant character of the music. Taruskin is interested not only in the issue of under or over-interpretation, but in demonstrating how in the half century which intervened between these recorded versions, the notated text has come to enjoy an apparently unassailable authority, even over the performance tradition the composer himself played (and composed) within. However, we shouldn't be too carried away by Taruskin's polemic here, which I think misses an important point. These are *recordings, not performances*, and Berman may indeed 'characterise' the music more potently in a live setting. (Or he may not: my only experience of Berman's pianism is from recordings and these do

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[74] See Stephen Davies, *Musical Meaning and Expression,* chapter 7, section entitled 'How Music is Like a Person' (p.367-369) for further discussion.

[75] The notion of 'topics' is explored by Leonard G. Ratner in *Classic Music: Expression, Form and Style* (New York: Schirmer, 1980). Topics are characteristic elements of a musical fabric which are recognisable because they have become part of the conventional code of expression. There is a striking similarity between this notion and the more familiar and widely used concept of genre.

[76] Richard Taruskin, *Text and Act*, p.188-189. This essay is entitled 'Tradition and Authority' (p.173-197).

not strike me as *generally* under-characterised in the manner Taruskin describes.) This does raise the issue of whether a recording is fairly viewed as a repository of an interpretation (a matter beyond the scope of this discussion). For Prokofiev in 1932, a recording is much closer to a live performance. Secondly, the neutral quality of Berman's playing strongly reflects the trend towards literalism – playing all the notes of the text in such a way that they can be unambiguously reported back by a skilled listener – as a condition of structuralism. This is especially apparent in recordings, which are by their very nature designed to be heard repeatedly. Over-characterisation may distract the listener who wishes to familiarise himself with 'the text', rather than an interpretation of it. With this function in mind, a recording is closer to a rehearsal or 'rendition' than a performance: once one has heard Berman, (perhaps backed up by the score, though with such a literal approach this is barely necessary), the element of interpretation in Prokofiev's own performance will be immediately audible, and in all likelihood a revelation.

The speed of a process is an important determinant of a music's character and this in turn rests on characteristics of human perception. At what point does a melodic oscillation between two notes become a trill, a repeated interval leap a Lisztian tremolando? There is presumably a perceptual limit here. The underlying structure in each case is an intervallic pattern, which is subjected to a performance process. Thus the single most important determinant of performative character is tempo and what is humanly perceivable as a 'pulse'. By tempo I mean a flexible, but recognisable consistent measuring pulse. Metronome markings are a good informal indicator of the limits, which coincide fairly precisely with the extreme rates at which a healthy heart beats (i.e. between 30 and 200 times a minute). The normal range of metronome markings, from crochet = 42 to crochet = 208. coincides with extremes of pulse (heart beat rate) a healthy person can reasonably experience. Beyond the extremes, one inevitably finds oneself either subdividing between strokes or grouping strokes together into larger units. David Epstein's theory of proportional tempo investigates this relationship in some detail.[77]

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[77] David Epstein, *Music, the Brain and Performance* (New York: Schirmer 1995). A good place to start is the summary on p.359-363. See also Jonathan D. Kramer, *The Time of Music: New Meanings, New Temporalities, New Listening Strategies* (New York: Schirmer, 1988).

My example above illustrated a historical development, which we could simplistically express as the demise of character in interpretation and the rise of structure, or its leaner cousin literalism, in its place. It further hinted at the role of recordings. My second example demonstrates how a performer can manipulate tempo as a global characterising force both to give an interpretation a more personal stamp – to set it off from the neutral textual representation of the music – while at the same time exploring the limits of musical expressivity. For Glenn Gould, this interpretative strategy and motive for adopting it often coincide. This is particularly well documented in some of his concerto recordings, where the presence of a conductor encouraged Gould, who was in any case rarely at a loss for an explanation for his own behaviour, to justify his extreme tempo choices publicly.[78] Much thought has been put into the importance of tempo relationships and their effect on performance unity. Some performers have gone to considerable (not to say absurd) lengths to retain a consistent underlying pulse in multi-sectioned pieces. Gould provides a further interesting example (not of a performance, note, but of a recording) in his second version on record of the Goldberg Variations (made in 1981), which pursues just such a unifying strategy.[79]

The struggle to humanise the abstract forms of absolute music does not always issue in a specific appeal to character. Heinrich Neuhaus, in his book entitled 'The Art of Piano Playing' talks of the 'artistic image' of a musical composition. He comments:

> I confess that the title [the artistic image of a musical composition] arouses some doubt in my mind, in spite of the fact that the conception it expresses is generally accepted and that everyone takes these words to signify something completely reasonable, understandable and real. But what is 'the artistic image of a musical composition' but music itself, the living fabric of sound, musical language with its rules, its component parts, which we call melody, harmony, polyphony,

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[78] Two well-known examples are his recordings of the Brahms D minor concerto with Leonard Bernstein; and the Beethoven 'Emperor' concerto with Stokowski. These are detailed in Michael Stegemann, *Glenn Gould, Leben und Werk* (Munich: Piper, 1996), p.207-210 and p.256-260 respectively.

[79] See Kevin Bazzana's analysis in *Glenn Gould: The Performer in the Work* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), p.160-203.

> etc., a specific formal structure, an emotional and poetic content?[80]

This desperate trawl for a unifying metaphor speaks eloquently of an insoluble problem.

Some Speculative Conclusions

My framework for discussing the nature of interpretation has been to examine the interaction of analysis and performance. Analysis is just one of the three forms of critical interpretation Danuser identifies (the structural); but the others, (the associative and stylistic) have made brief appearances in the discussion. It will be clear by now that this focus on, or search for, the growing emphasis on the structural in interpretation and performance reflects a historical trend. In a sense, an interpretation is that element of performance which is structured (or fixed). Nonetheless it would seem that the relationship between analysis-as-critical-interpretation and performance-as-performative-interpretation is complex. It is certainly not straightforwardly causal. Nor would I describe it as ambiguous; I would prefer the morally loaded synonym *equivocal*. Performance practice is, after all, a practice among practices, subject to pressures and driven by convictions.

I would like to offer a speculation on the nature of this equivocation. The key to understanding how performers can do without explicit formal analysis is, I believe, to be found in an elaboration of the spatial metaphor.[81] Consider the following points:

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[80] Heinrich Neuhaus, *The Art of Piano Playing*, trans. K. A. Leibovitch (London: Kahn and Averill, 1993), p.7.

[81] The points I make below are compatible with the conclusions Stephen Davies comes to in his discussion of musical understanding. On his view, musical understanding is always linked to hearing music under a description. He distinguishes two broad categories of description, the technical and the metaphorical. His claim is that, while musical training and the acquisition of a technical vocabulary may enhance understanding, it is not strictly necessary: lay audience members may gain as much from the listening process as the technically initiated. I am claiming that performers may also lack a certain kind of technical understanding and that this lack may not influence the performed outcome and even ultimately remain undetected. The additional point I make is that the technical understanding is itself in an important respect metaphorical. Davies, *Musical Meaning and Expression*, chapter 7.

1. Musicians learn to identify pattern, or 'shape' in music, through training to hear both intervals (successively as motifs and melody and coincidentally, as harmony) and rhythms (as rhythmic cells or figures). Scales consist of 'steps'. We can usefully distinguish between literal understanding of these proto-elements and the structures composers build out of them. The notes of a composition are reifications or 'objects' which can be used to build bigger objects.

2. These basic geometric shapes can be related isomorphically to our general experience of the world around us, for example to human behaviour as bodily gesture/dance and speech or to some similarly interpretable environmental activity (as in much programme music).[82] It is not a question of simply 'translating' metaphorical musical movement/shape into real movement: because music is non-referential, the possibilities are manifold. At the same time, our conceptual and verbal understanding of ourselves is limited, because language cannot ultimately be freed from its metaphorical underpinning.[83] The metaphors of space and movement within it imply a 'vehicle'. Here consciousness and the musical process become inextricably entangled.[84]

Instrumental teachers spend a great deal of time developing a currency of metaphors for interpreting musical movement in terms of other experience familiar to the pupil.

3. Performing musicians appear to bypass these initial phases often, and instead concentrate on the emotions, moods and feeling tones that they perceive the music as expressing. (I will have to bypass the enormous literature on the nature of musical expressivity.[85]) While a 'bottom-up' analysis is possible, perhaps even desirable, many performers will be content to rely on their intuition here. Having decoded the literal content of the text, they will experiment directly with nuance, testing the effects of one interpretative choice against another empirically. In this

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[82] This rather vague term isomorphism is elaborated on by Peter Kivy in *Sound Semblance: Reflections on Musical Representation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991, second edition), p.75-77 and in Laird Addis's recent study *Of Mind and Music* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), especially in chapter 6 (p.70-83).

[83] George Lakoff and Mark Johnson talk of 'emergent' metaphors and concepts. *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1980), p.58.

[84] This is the central topic of Laird Addis's book *Of Mind and Music*.

[85] Davies, *Musical Meaning and Expression* provides a good starting point.

they will be limited in part by their technical resources and, even more importantly, by their musical imagination. So as long as performers respect the 'literal' content of notation – play the correct pitches and recognisably correct rhythms – their interpretation, however it was arrived at, will imply a structural understanding, though one which no listener could ever reconstruct.

4. There is no limit to the metaphorical imagination in principle: there are no real limits to how local structure and global form can be understood associatively. They can be related to classes of biographical or historical event, or even to actual events. Although the reception of music in the nineteenth century often favoured such association, the trend has been away from such understandings towards a more severely 'structural' approach. But in the practice of musical production, this trend is largely invisible: just as we cannot divine an analysis behind an interpretation, nor can we ever know from a performance alone what metaphorical understanding the performer might have developed, let alone comment on its appropriateness.

I have ignored the feedback provided by knowledge gained from other music, the matter of 'stylistic awareness' mentioned above, which is an important adjunct. The secondary source of information provided by stylistic factors and genre associations further helps us to identify form (i.e. shape over larger time scales). All three elements of critical interpretation – structural, stylistic and associative – are potentially present.

To reiterate: in developing an interpretation, an instrumentalist (pianist) can work through some, or even all, of the phases outlined above, from literal decoding, then seeking out patterns at the level of detail, phrase, paragraph/section or large-scale form, before deciding how to weld them together into a sequence: from local patterns to general (contestable) associations. She can carry out cursory or detailed harmonic and/or thematic analysis. Or she can rely on her intuition (informed or otherwise) and experiment directly on the instructions in the score with nuance, testing its effect without seeking for an analytical justification.

Summary

When musicologists comment that the score underdetermines the performance, it is nuance which is the primary additive. A fuller statement of this idea would be as follows: the score underdetermines the interpretation, which underdetermines the performance. Scores and interpretations are both types of musical representation. There is a risk/opportunity gap between each level, and an ideal listener (such as the expert performer) can identify the contribution of each level, the roles of accident and intention. The score is the most stable representation: to hear the invariant score through the performance is relatively straightforward. Being able to separate out interpretation from score requires considerable powers of musical discernment (and probably some familiarity with the particular work), which can be acquired only with practice. It is almost inconceivable that a listener, however expert, could claim to distinguish reliably a further level of analysis informing interpretation.

Becoming an expert performer entails building up musicianship skills over a long period. Expert practice is often intuitive. There need be no direct line from analysis to synthesis in performance preparation, which contains both linear and cyclic elements. This is as true of the bigger picture as of the individual practice session. Nonetheless, analyses of various kinds – in particular the partitioning of the musical flow into units – play a major role in preparing an interpretation, though it is not always clear how conscious the analytical act is.

Interpretations are nuanced versions of an ideal invariant notation. Nuance operates within a framework of tempo: both are partly responsible for the music's character, or mood. The *exact* nature of musical interpretations is indeterminate, as they are only accessible through performance, which is unique to each occasion. Interpretations can, however, achieve an audible identity from performance to performance.

The notion of an interpretation as a fixed mental 'object 'or representation sits rather uneasily with the fact that an interpretation can only be heard as a process. The spatial metaphor which informs our appreciation of music tolerates a

degree of contrariness. Just as language contains grammatical resources for describing both location and movement (prepositional in English), so there are two aspects of the spatial metaphor, differently emphasised by performers and analysts. There seems to be a coincidence of some kind between the notion of musical movement and mental consciousness. Finally we can say that analysis plays a possible, not necessary role in creating a fixed (but not completely rigid) representation of the music in the performer's mind.

Historically we can note the increasing influence of both literalism and structuralism on performance practice, a process of cumulative fixation. There is a point at which a law of diminishing returns comes into force. When interpretations become totally fixed, they become indistinguishable from performances and performance, devoid of interaction, loses its moral character. In accounting for these developments, a third type of musical representation – recording – begs our attention. In the final section of this chapter, I will examine the influence of the different categories of musical representation on each other in more detail.

Part Three: Interpretation, Representation and Cultural Transmission

In the last section I discussed interpretation in terms of the analysis of the notated musical text, arguing against a simple causal relationship whereby an analysis determined a performative interpretation. Rather, in arriving at an interpretation, performers draw on a range of metaphorical understandings of music – with the music-as-language image prominent among them – which may ultimately be reducible to a common denominator of a musical 'space' containing 'objects' through which the 'vehicle' of consciousness moves.[86] Certainly the fact that the art music performer works from a spatial notation constantly reinforces and naturalises this form of understanding.

Metaphorical understanding implies a context. As a starting point for the next stage of the discussion, I propose to examine more closely the limitations of the musical text as a definer of what music is before moving on to examine the context of interpretation.

The Musical Text

This is the title of a recent article by Stanley Boorman.[87] The author is a Professor (New York) whose primary field of interest is in Renaissance music and the history of music printing. He is also the director of the Collegium Musicum.[88] In other words, his activities straddle two potentially conflicting practices, with a suggestion of narrowness (his historical interests are primarily pre-modern) and breadth (he is a performer). I think his views reflect this: although he approaches the topic with academically inspired caution, commenting that 'the written or

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[86] I find myself in agreement here with Stephen Davies: 'I believe that the expressiveness of music depends mainly on a resemblance we perceive between the dynamic character of music and human movement, gait, bearing or carriage.' *Musical Meaning and Expression*, p.229. For a critique of this view, see Addis, *Of Mind and Music*, p.112.

[87] Stanley Boorman, 'The Musical Text', p.403-423.

[88] See 'Notes on Contributors' in Cook and Everist, *Rethinking Music*, p.xiv.

printed musical text is an object to be mistrusted at every turn'.[89] his opening sally of questions invites radical answers. So although his essay is for the most part devoted to scrutinising the status of the notated musical text with a view to demonstrating its shortcomings, it is this group of framing questions which makes the essay of relevance here.

Boorman asks three questions at the outset:

1. Must a musical text be written down?
2. Does a recording constitute a text?
3. Can a performance count as a text?[90]

In a sense these are just instances of a bigger question about the ontology of the musical work: how do we define it?

All the questions imply a distinction between text and context. If, in the past, musicologists have concentrated on the former, they have recently turned more and more frequently to the problem of theorising context.[91] By pointing to the fragility (ambivalence, arbitrariness, incompleteness etc.) of the notated text, Boorman is inviting us to rethink context too. His conclusion is that 'the notated text is *no longer* the definer of a musical composition as we understand it' (the important implication being that it once was).[92] Later he calls the text a 'version' of the work.[93]

Having provided this partially negative answer, Boorman is a little hesitant about drawing positive conclusions from it. Nonetheless, he does give us a useful hint. The notated text is, he says, 'no more than a definer of *a specific moment in the evolving history of the composition*... '.[94] I may be doing Boorman a disservice in taking this metaphor of evolution (barely hinted at in passing) so seriously. But

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[89] Boorman, 'The Musical Text', p.403.
[90] Ibid, p.403.
[91] Naomi Cumming talks of the change of root metaphor within the discipline of analysis from organicism to contextualism. See Jim Samson's reference to her work in 'Analysis in Context', p.50. Samson poses the question of how to theorise context at the beginning of 'Chopin reception: theory, history, analysis'.
[92] Boorman, 'The Musical Text', p.420. (My italics.)
[93] Boorman, 'The Musical Text', p.422.

the image of the work-as-life-form, however appropriate it may be. does seem to inform his argument. Or at least the conclusions his argument implies lead inexorably in this direction. Indeed the image of the musical work as constituted by a multi-formed evolving life-form – which could be viewed as a thinly disguised extension of the organicist metaphor – has become increasingly popular.[95]

The first problem in pursuing the image of the musical-work-as-life-form is to find a potential common denominator for the different candidates for the status of 'text' – 'versions' of the work – Boorman mentions. These include not only notation, recordings and performances, but also 'readings', and 'understandings', by which I presume he means interpretations.[96] What notated texts, recordings and interpretations have in common is the fact that they *represent* music in different forms.[97] Performances are ontologically distinct, because they are ephemeral processes. I have argued that any real time process involving an agent, a text of some kind and an audience can qualify as a performance, so this potentially includes activities like reading and listening. Performances are realisations of representations. With this in mind, my answers to Boorman's questions above would be as follows:

1. A musical text (i.e. representation) need not be written down, as there are other methods of storage.

2. Recordings qualify as texts/representations precisely because they store music as a product.

3. A processual performance is never the text itself: it is always *of* a text (or texts) and always more than that text, as each performance is novel and unique. It can only become a text/representation if it is stored in some form, implying some future retrieval and performance.

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[94] Ibid, p.420. (My italics.)

[95] Cook, *Music: A Very Short Introduction* contains provocative and pertinent comment on this topic (p.73-74).

[96] Boorman, 'The Musical Text', p.407 and 409. 'Readings' refers to recorded performances; 'understandings' refers to critical interpretation.

[97] There is wide use of the term 'representation' in discussions of music theory and aesthetics. See for example Davies, *Musical Meaning and Expression* for an overview; and Cook, *Music: A Very Short Introduction*, chapter 5 (p.75-86).

To return to the question: how do we define a musical composition? The answer Boorman's text implies could be stated as follows: *a composition (or better, 'work') is a population of identifiably similar representations.* I claimed in the first section of this chapter that the ontology of performance-as-process I have been advocating requires us to group interpretation together with other products which exist to store music. I proposed that we think in terms of a variety of products which represent music in different ways. The three basic categories I identified were:

1. Spatial notation, including manuscripts, printed editions, and other notated versions of music.
2. Audio recordings of various kinds (from mechanical music boxes, through piano rolls to analogue and digital disc and tape recording).
3. Mental representations of music, which can be subdivided into critical and performative interpretations.

These primary categories, which aim for comprehensive representation, shade into secondary categories, which include analyses, transcriptions, arrangements and quotations; recorded arrangements and excerpts; critical interpretations; and a host of dependent materials and codes connected with technique, instrumentation, movement and dress, many of which have been excavated by musical authenticists. There is no firm dividing line between primary and secondary categories, but rather a constant renegotiation of the integral, supplementary and inessential. All these taken together constitute what might be called the *life-world* of the work. At any given moment, a work exists as a product in various forms of storage, more or less stable; and it comes to life in various ephemeral soundings and readings which we group together as processual performances.

Some might argue that this grand scheme simply transfers the problem of defining the work as such to defining 'representation', or at least to identifying what it is that entitles us to classify notations, recordings, and interpretations together in this way. The obvious common denominator is *reification*: the three

categories of representation all fix music in different ways. But how does this population of more or less stable representations renew or 'reproduce' itself? A more sophisticated account of the cultural transmission of representations has been provided by Dan Sperber, to whose work I now turn.

The Transmission of Representations: a Theory

Dan Sperber's work on the theory of representations and cultural transmission is an offshoot of his work in linguistics. His important text on pragmatics (entitled *Relevance*) was first published in 1985.[98] In this work he and his co-author, Deidre Wilson, offered a detailed review and critique of the 'code' model of communication, developing a pragmatics-orientated supplement to it which stressed the determining role of the relevance of information to a receiver. The traditional 'code' model was formulated in mathematics by Shannon and Weaver in 1949; it has been adapted to fit verbal (spoken) communication most notably by Jakobsen, whose model is widely referred to in semiotics.[99] Sperber's aim is to account for degrees and types of resemblance in communication.[100] In pursuing this topic, he concluded that the code-based theory was inadequate in some respects, for example when considering human psychology, but his goal was to complement rather than replace it.

The theory of representations which Sperber has subsequently developed – which he calls an 'epidemiology of representations' – is thematically related. It attempts to analyse how culture, viewed as a body of 'representations', reproduces itself, and evolves. His approach is to examine culture in terms of replicating mechanisms, as opposed to a collection of genres, or schemata, such as laws, artworks, beliefs and so on. His theory is thus unusual in its attempt to examine the phenomenon of representation as such rather than to classify representations and

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[98] Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson, *Relevance: Communication and Cognition* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986, second edition 1995).

[99] An introductory account of Shannon and Weaver's model is available in Sperber and Wilson, *Relevance*, p.4-5; and of Jakobsen's work in Terence Hawkes, *Structuralism and Semiotics* (London: Methuen, 1977), p.83.

consider them separately. To put it another way. the novelty is to pick out a different kind of generality – the mode of reproduction – as a starting point for analysis.

His recent book *Explaining Culture: a Naturalistic Approach* (1996) consists in part of reworked articles dating back to the early 1980s.[101] He describes his project as contributing to a potential 'natural science of the social'. with a naturalistic approach to culture (and particularly anthropology, from which field his practical illustrations tend to be drawn).[102] By 'naturalistic' he means, I think, 'rooted in human psychology'. Because this is a theory of replication, not of meaning, it does not have anything to say about uniqueness as a source of meaning and in this sense it aligns itself with the scientific endeavour in general and psychology (including music psychology) in particular. In the next section I will outline his theory in more detail.

Types of Representation

A representation is a stored/storable version of a cultural content of some kind.

> A representation sets up a relationship between at least three terms: that which represents, that which is represented, and the user of the representation.

He goes on:

> A fourth term may be added when there is a producer of the representation distinct from the user: it is then a *mental representation*, such as a memory, a belief, or an intention.[103]

Sperber classifies representations into different groups. There are two main categories: *mental representations* and *public representations*, the latter existing in

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[100] Dan Sperber, *Explaining Culture: A Naturalistic Approach* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), p.83.
[101] See previous footnote for full reference.
[102] Sperber, *Explaining Culture*, preface, p.vi.
[103] Ibid, p.32. The idea is stated in a slightly different form again on p.61.

the environment and available for general use. He also considers *cultural* and *collective representations* as special cases.[104]

Cultural representations are those mental representations that are constantly in circulation, widely distributed and durable (e.g. the language of a community itself). Musical examples would be nursery rhymes, national anthems, and popular songs. The degree of durability and frequency of occurrence in the culture varies from item to item. So 'cultural representations... are a fuzzy subset of the set of mental and public representations inhabiting a given social group.'[105] One problematic category is *collective representations*: those representations which might be attributed to a group as a whole but which may never be represented by any single individual.[106]. Candidates for collective representations are musical ensemble works, especially if there is no conductor, and group improvisations. Collective representations thus pose a problem of attribution – authorship – which echoes the problem of the idealist/Platonist ontology of the musical work. About a collective representation we might ask: who is responsible for the performance? Whose performance is it? Whose intention does it represent? About a work: what, or where, is the work? Is it the score, the performance, or some amalgam? In both cases we feel driven to fill a psychological gap, positing an entity which is very difficult to substantiate philosophically: it amounts to a psychologically plausible convenience.

Sperber is more generous than I have been in his application of the term interpretation, which he equates with representation. Specifically his category of mental representations are synonymous with interpretations, as I have discussed them. They are mental 'objects'. Generally, though, Sperber defines an interpretation as '... a representation of a representation by virtue of a similarity of content.'[107] The sense of this definition is not altered significantly if the terms interpretation and representation are reversed. Public representations certainly include the physical entities (printed texts, recordings) mentioned above, but

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[104] Ibid, p.32-34.
[105] Ibid, p.33.
[106] Ibid, p.35. Sperber invites comparison with Durkheim's term 'collective representation' (p.61).
[107] Ibid, p.34.

Sperber does not make the kind of hard and fast distinction between reifying forms of storage and retrieval processes I have advocated.[108]

Representations form populations and generate chains through time. Consider this example: someone encounters a public representation e.g. a score. and decides to perform it. So they learn the score (i.e. they form a mental representation of it) and then perform it in public (a public representation) which in turn creates the wish in some of the audience to hear the work again; they then purchase another kind of public representation – a recording – and over a period of time also form mental representations of the work. A critic might also have reviewed the performance, thereby creating another kind of public representation (the review article), which is in turn read by other members of the public, who discuss it with friends, who form mental representations… and so on. Although public representations (such as books) can be reproduced ad infinitum, mental representations cannot reproduce without entering the public domain at least fleetingly (for example as speech).

What such a description makes clear is the need for a performative/critical distinction as employed in the discussion of interpretation above; and as with other conceptual boundaries, this will be contestable on occasion.

The Epidemiology of Representations

There is an analogy to be drawn between epidemics and cultural transmission: a representation spreads itself through a population like a disease. This idea is not new.[109] It has resurfaced, shorn of its associations of debilitation, as a fashionable analogy between cultural transmission and genetic replication. The biologist Richard Dawkins originally popularised the term 'meme' to rhyme with gene.[110] The limitations of this analogy have been much discussed. So Susan Blackmore, a stalwart advocate of the study of memetics, admits that 'genes and

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[108] Ibid, p.61.
[109] Ibid, p.82. The earliest attribution of this idea is to Gabriel Tarde, in the late nineteenth century.
[110] Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, revised edition 1989), p.192.

memes are both replicators but otherwise are different.'[111] But even this overstates the similarities, because it suggests that the mechanism of replication is the same in both biological and cultural arenas. It is clear that genetic mutation is, compared to cultural transformation, very rare, occurs at a consistent, measurable rate, and does not normally enhance survival chances.[112] Sperber makes the point that communication has traditionally been thought of as the replication of one person's thoughts in the mind of another. In fact, 'strict replication, if it exists at all, should be viewed as just a limiting case of maximal resemblance, rather than the norm of communication.'[113] Hence communication is best viewed as involving transformation, on a spectrum between exact duplication ('zero transformation replication') and total loss of information. The scale runs through shades of influence into unrelatedness and unrecognisability.

In fact there is an important distinction to be made between the 'meme' model and the 'influence' model of cultural transmission. While both entail an idea of competition and 'success',[114] the 'meme' model provides us with the insight that Darwinian selection is not limited to biological material, but can apply to replicators of any kind.[115] The 'influence' model allows for the possibility that new representations may be the 'offspring' of not just one or two, but of a potentially unlimited number of parents. (This is the familiar 'blending' problem which so occupied the 'pre-genetic' generation of Darwinists.) If we add to this the idea mooted above that the musical work is not itself one representation, but a whole series of complementary competing representations occupying an ecological niche, the analogy – or what is left of it – begins to make more sense. For example, consider what Sperber has to say about how sets of representations create self-perpetuating institutions. He says: 'An institution is the distribution of a set of representations which is governed by representations belonging to the set itself.'[116] The Macintyrean view I espoused above (chapter 2, **The Practice: (3) the**

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[111] Susan Blackmore, *The Meme Machine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p.66.
[112] This is discussed at length in Blackmore, *The Meme Machine*, ch.5.
[113] Sperber, *Explaining Culture*, p.83.
[114] Sperber, *Explaining Culture*, p.104-5.
[115] Ibid, p.102.
[116] Ibid, p.76.

Dialectic of Practice and Institution) claimed that institutions characteristically contain potentially conflicting representations and Sperber's definition implicitly endorses this.[117]

Mass mechanical reproduction of representations (which do not cross the public-mental threshold) does not in itself constitute cultural transmission. Mental representations are a sine qua non. Sperber claims that 'only those representations which are repeatedly communicated *and* minimally transformed in the process will end up belonging to the culture.'[118] Individuals do not necessarily remember what they encounter exactly: they only bother to store information which they judge as potentially relevant for an unpredictable future (i.e. what aids survival or improves its quality, to put it crudely). The formation of mental representations also involves altering the structure of the material to fit the mind: human beings do not store information in 'raw' form, but are forced to change it for storage and recall purposes. Newly minted representations are subject to the limitations of human psychology: perception and memory filter and transform.[119] Language is encoded in grammar, not remembered as discrete lists of sentences (Chomsky pointed this out). So the cognitive construction and reconstruction processes – the mental 'bottleneck' – crucially affect the character and survival chances of representations both critical and performative.[120] The technologies of writing (and later recording) language and music obviously provide more stable means of storing representations

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[117] Ibid, p.76.
[118] Ibid, p.83.
[119] A well-known example is provided by experiments involving the recall of narrative. Ibid, p.74.
[120] One way in which Sperber has pursed this issue is by proposing an economy of representations. The individual will try to maximise relevance, and will do so in this way: 'Cognitive efficiency involves making the right choices in selecting which available new information to attend to and which available past information to process it with. The right choices... consist in bringing together input and memory information, the joint processing of which will provide as much cognitive effect as possible for as little mental effort as possible.' (Ibid, p.114.) He also suggests that there are certain particularly attractive positions which representations will tend to move towards. Factors which play a part in the 'attraction model' include the form of the representation: what makes a form better or worse will depend, he says, on universals of human psychology on the one hand, and local cultural practices on the other. (Ibid, p.106.) Differentiating between psychological universals and environmental factors takes him into discussions of innateness and the theory of the modularity of mind. (Ibid, ch.5 and 6). In this regard, his distinction between disposition and susceptibility is relevant: a disposition is a trait humans have been selected for, whereas a susceptibility is an accidental side effect of a trait. (Ibid, p.67.) This distinction is difficult to uphold because dispositions presumably start out life as susceptibilities: random mutation is accidental at base level. See also chapter 5 of this study below (footnote 108).

than other (transforming) minds: this has allowed more (and different) representations to be developed and communicated, as the internal memory store is supplemented by these external representations. Subjective perception and memory play a more limited role and representations tend to preserve their structure more accurately.[121] In summary, we could say that

> ... the most evocative representations are those which, on the one hand, are closely related to the subject's other mental representations (i.e. maximise relevance) and on the other hand, can never be given a final interpretation (i.e. invite further transformation). It is these *relevant mysteries* as they could be described, which are culturally successful.[122]

This strikes me as an eminently fitting description of art music practice: a population of representations is subject to continual minimal transformation in a potentially endless cycle which strives to avoid closure.

Although Sperber does not allot the concept a position within his theory, I think the notion of processual performance slots fairly neatly into it. It simply describes the moment at which a representation is *transformed* (i.e. performed and changed). On the other hand, I think we can sense a limitation in the application of Sperber's ideas to the ontology of performance I have been pursuing: Sperber`s theory operates at the general level of human psychology, not at the individual level. It doesn't take account of artistic uniqueness.

What interests us is how the different representations which constitute the life-world of the musical work have interacted with each other and which have been most successful. I have already discussed the role of the score and its analysis as an influence on performative interpretation. Of the other categories of representation I listed above, it is the audio recording which begs for consideration and in this section I will make a few brief comments on this huge (but significantly under-theorised) topic.

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[121] Ibid, p.75.
[122] Ibid, p 73. Incidentally, this mechanism helps explain the success of representations which have no basis in fact, such as superstitions.

The Ontology of Recordings

For the moment I will put aside historical concerns and simply point to some of the features of recordings which distinguish them from performances or interpretations.[123] The first is that a sound recording, whatever technology it involves, is always mediated by that technology.[124] As a consequence, the conditions of musical performance which pertain in the concert hall are in most instances radically, in a few instances modestly altered.[125] For example, the 'audience', such as it is, will probably consist for the most part of professional technicians and advisors; and there is no necessary unity of time, place and action. Following on from this, the performer's intentions will be influenced by the fixed nature of the recorded product in many different ways. This has consequences too for the reception of recorded music. This differs according to many factors, prominent among which are the kind of reproduction technology available (is it

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[123] A useful source of reference here is Michael Chanan *Repeated Takes: A Short History of Recording and its Effects on Music* (London: Verso, 1995), though there is unfortunately no separate bibliography. Evan Eisenberg, *The Recording Angel: Music, Records and Culture from Aristotle to Zappa* (London: Picador, 1987) is a wide-ranging, thought-provoking study.

[124] Two indispensable references here are Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in *Illuminations*; and Theodor Adorno, 'On the Fetish Character of Music and the Regression of Listening' (1938), in *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, eds. Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt (New York: Urizen Books, 1978), p.270-299. The issue of mediation is fundamental, because it entails reification. Consider a few of the ramifications. Notation is itself a 'record' of a composition, but a spatial, not a sounding record. The details of the notational system – a technology – determine certain limits within which choices can be made. Recordings are parallel constructions using different technologies. The form of objectification – analogue or digital cylinder, wire, disc, tape – its modes of manufacture and physical storage are a further complication: a 'record' – a 12" 33rpm vinyl disc, for example – contains a certain amount of potential storage time (up to about 30 minutes per side). It both enables and limits the modes of access to the music in novel ways: for example, finding a particular bar of music on a cassette recording and playing it back repeatedly is in some respects rather trickier than on a vinyl or shellac disc, or a CD. Furthermore, recordings are not usually of works, though they can be, but of programmes or excerpts, played by one artist or many different ones.

[125] Even the oxymoronic 'live' recording is by no means as transparently unmediated as it might seem: there are numerous instance of 'live' recordings undergoing substantial subsequent studio editing (a certain amount of which must in any case take place). The story of Horowitz's 'live' recording of his comeback concert at Carnegie Hall in 1965 demonstrates this point as well as any (it turned out that the recording of the concert contained studio 'enhancements'). See Harold C. Schonberg, *Horowitz: His Life and Music* (London: Simon and Schuster, 1992), p.217-220.

portable, for example?), and the musical genre.[126] All of these differences (and this is by no means an exhaustive list) vary significantly at different historical points, and the variations follow largely predictable patterns.

A recording is not a performance, then: more often than not it is a constructed, 'ideal' event which represents not a single rendition of a work (or even a movement from a work) but a record of something which never took place in the form in which it is represented.[127] Even in those instances where a recording can fairly claim to be such a record of a continuous performance (as was the rule at the beginning of the twentieth century, at least until taping and splicing became established practice), the context in which it is reheard is different. Further, the notion that the performer is reacting to the performance situation, the sense of give and take between audience and performer, is not simply attenuated, it is destroyed: the performer cannot know exactly what the circumstances are in which his playing will be heard. The distinction between calculated nuance and those detailed swerves and jousts that arise in the unique flow of the moment – the distinction between the planned aspect of a performative interpretation and that margin which is dependent on feedback – is lost. This fact has implications for the role of skill in 'live' performance, as the concept of skilful performance depends on their being a continuous, uninterrupted, immediate feedback loop between the acts of the performer and the sounds produced. Acts must cause sounds and be heard (and for pianists at least potentially *seen*) to do so. So a recording does not represent a performative interpretation, either.

Rather, a recording is a new kind of musical representation. It specifies tempi, timbres and nuances in a novel way. These are also 'idealised', in the sense that they are subject to a further level of mediation by the listener operating the sound reproduction technology. In the words of one commentator

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[126] Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p.227. See also chapter 3 above (**Narrowing the Focus: Theories and Descriptions of Musical Performance**).

[127] This point is made by Evan Eisenberg, *The Recording Angel: Music, Records and Culture from Aristotle to Zappa*, chapter 8 'Phonography', p.89-131.

> [Recordings] constitute a fundamentally new sort of object of musical interest, distinct from both performances and compositions, and providing occasion for a new domain of musical artistry distinct from composing and performing.[128]

Recordings as Musical Representations

The question of the status of recordings is rather akin to that concerning the status of the musical text. Notation, though primarily a medium, a means to an end, is by no means always confined to this humble function. This is much more strikingly the case with the recording, which though nominally a medium – a 'record' of an event – turns out to offer significant opportunities to construct a substantially new 'ideal' event with remarkable performative qualities. From the very beginning, the evolving technology *requires* constructive intervention. Like film, it is a multi-authored form involving technical back-up staff. The recording itself soon comes to exceed the modest role of memento, eventually generating a radically new mode of musical consumption. This is far more evident in the fields of popular music and jazz (which also differ from each other in the uses they put recordings to) than in mainstream art music. My concern here is to show how art music recordings, as musical representations, have reinforced the rise of structuralism/formalism, which itself is a symptom of the tendency to freeze ('objectify') music into a predictable, controllable product.

Robert Philip has studied how recordings over the course of the twentieth century document important changes in performance style. He summarises a wide

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[128] Aron Edidin, ''Three Kinds of Recording and the Metaphysics of Music', in *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 39 (1999), 24-39, (p.38). I should say that Edidin is here referring specifically to his third category of recording. The three kinds of recording he distinguishes are: (1) recordings of performances; (2) recordings of compositions; and (3) recording-artefacts. The thrust of his argument is that '... the ephemerality of performances as events is of little aesthetic significance' (p.25) and that '[t]he domain of music is enlarged in scope and diversity by the three kinds of recording... but it is not fundamentally fragmented.' (p.39) I need hardly say that Edidin and I are in fundamental disagreement on the first of these points. Useful though his threefold division may be, I see his analysis as flawed because it fails to find a place for performative interpretation as a distinct and aesthetically meaningful element within what he calls the 'domain of music'. He crucially refers to 'the' performance of a work as a reified entity even after admitting that performances are ephemeral, time-bound events. (p.25, p.27) But the notion that the reproduced 'soundings' of a

variety of such changes as 'a trend towards greater power, firmness, clarity, control, literalness, and evenness of expression, and away from informality, looseness, and unpredictability'.[129] Recordings from the early years of the century

> ... give a vivid impression of being projected as if to an audience. They have a sense of being 'put across', so that the precision and clarity of each note is less important than the shape and progress of the music as a whole. They are intended to convey what *happens* in the music, to characterise it. The accurate reproduction of the musical text is merely a means to an end.[130]

Later he comments: 'If pre-war recordings are remarkably like live performances, many late twentieth-century live performances are remarkably like recordings.'[131]

Philip speculates that there were a number of reasons behind this development, each underpinning the other. For example, he cites the increase in rehearsal time for orchestras; one can assume a parallel increase in practice time for solo pianists, as performance from memory became obligatory. More significant perhaps is the fact that all recordings, including pre splice-era recordings of 'performances' (or more precisely, integral play-throughs) can be listened to repeatedly, granting inaccuracies an intolerable ontological status. In live performance, the listener can be relied upon to sort intentions from accidents (and here the visibility of the proceedings helps): one can *see* the commitment with which a performer was attempting to realise an artistic intention, even when she fails. The failure might be interpreted in good faith as evidence that the performer was giving her utmost.

The problem of errors on a recording being heard as integral to the 'performance' it contained, rather than 'accidental' (in both a positive and negative sense) was identified early on by the first and second generations of recording

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recording entail de facto the original performance (on those occasions when a single continuous performance was indeed recorded) is open to challenge, as my comments above make clear.

[129] Robert Philip, *Early Recordings and Musical Style: Changing Tastes in Instrumental Performance 1900-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p.229.

[130] Philip, *Early Recordings and Musical Style*, p.230.

[131] Ibid p.231.

artist, such as Rachmaninoff and Schnabel. Inevitably it affected their playing and their attitude towards it. Schnabel commented:

> It is almost impossible to play with the mechanical exactitude which is required for a definitive, never-to-be-changed performance without sacrificing some measure of concentration and freedom.[132]

The inevitable conclusion – that a recording has significantly different ontological, aesthetic and intentional qualities from a performance – led to the next generation of recording artists making a virtue of necessity: technological innovation and aesthetic forethought eventually produced a radically different approach to recording. It was Glenn Gould, foreshadowed by Toscanini's practice, who articulated the new vision, and to the chagrin of many concert-goers, simultaneously put it into practice.[133]

Gould marks a turning point in the history of recording. His theorising and practice – and the insights of Benjamin and Adorno before him – have been variously acknowledged, even as they are strenuously resisted or selectively ignored. Here are some examples. Alfred Brendel acknowledges 'two officially canonised sources of musical experience, concert performing and studio recording', adding that 'the studio demands control over a mosaic'. He also points out that 'studio recordings have enormously increased the acuteness of detailed listening'.[134] Contrast Brendel's cautious optimism with Daniel Barenboim's views. He traces this increased attentiveness into the very moment of recording itself where its influence is decidedly negative: 'In the studio there is a tendency to bring out all the elements one has thought about and prepared in advance.'[135] What he is describing is a drive towards self-consciously complete performative

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[132] Cesar Saerchinger, *Artur Schnabel: a Biography* (London: Cassell, 1957), p.224.

[133] Geoffrey Payzant, *Glenn Gould: Music and Mind* (Toronto: Key Porter, 1984), ch.3 entitled 'A Higher Calling' (p.35-50) discusses Gould's decision to give up performing in the concert hall. Edward Said also comments on this in the first chapter ('Performance as an Extreme Occasion') of *Musical Elaborations*. Taruskin is alert to the link between formalism, transcendentalism and the positive reception of Gould's recorded work. See *Text and Act*, p.23.

[134] This is in the context of a discussion of 'live' recordings, which he claims stand between them. 'A Case for Live Recordings' in *Music Sounded Out: Essays Lectures, Interviews, Afterthoughts* (London: Robson, 1990), p.200-208, quotation from p.200.

interpretation devoid of unpredictability, and hence of risks and opportunities too. Barenboim is sceptical about the value of recording as a constructed. 'ideal' event precisely because the ideal of control over the life process is chimerical:

> To me music runs parallel to nature, and in relation to what has been and what comes afterwards. The passionate wish to make the clock stand still is just not possible in life – it keeps ticking away. The naturalistic idea of music is the very antithesis of recording, and recording at best can only be the historical record of a given moment.[136]

Andras Schiff is equally critical of recordings as constructed artefacts. His argument is that they are a form of cheating and hence morally suspect:

> What I object to... is the type of editing that goes on in the studios. You may hear some very good performances on record and you know very well that some of the pianists on the labels would never be able to play those works in the same way. The art of the musician is to play a work in its entirety, not in separate bits, doing continuously some repairs. I want a recording to represent what you are actually doing.[137]

There is however no serious doubt that recordings have transformed both performing and listening habits profoundly. The history of recording indicates that it took some time for performers to come to terms with the new medium and that this process is far from finished. Conflicting views as to its value continue to be articulated. The historical trajectory is nonetheless clear. More and more, it is the recording which has become the model by which live musical performance has come to be judged. Steven Connor has argued that there has been an 'inversion of the structural dependence of copies on originals' and the insight, more commonly associated with rock and popular music, is equally valid in the art music field.[138]

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[135] Daniel Barenboim, *A Life in Music* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1991), p.34.
[136] Barenboim, *A Life in Music*, p.34.
[137] Interview in *Journal of the European Piano Teachers Association*, no. 36 vol. 12 (1991), 9-12. (p.12). For a similar complaint from an earlier generation, see Denis Matthews, *In Pursuit of Music* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1966), p.111.
[138] Steven Connor, *Postmodernist Culture: an Introduction to Theories of the Contemporary* (Oxford: Blackwell, second edition 1997), p.175.

The qualities of clarity and literalness which Robert Philip associates with art music performance and recording are in turn equally attributable to the influence of formalism, itself an objectifying force: the two cultural factors are mutually reinforcing.

Representations and the Reification of Performance

I hope these brief comments are sufficient to show that recordings and performances are indeed ontologically distinct. To claim that a recording artist is performing is either to invoke a quite distinct notion of what performance is (as Said does), or to make a fundamental category mistake. Recordings. like scores and performative interpretations, are representations of music.

Richard Taruskin's well-known critique of the concept of authentic performance makes a similar point with regard to the work concept and its uneasy relationship with performance:

> Turning ideas into objects, and putting objects in place of people, is the essential modernist fallacy – the fallacy of reification, as it is called. It fosters the further fallacy of forgetting that performances, even canned performances, are not things but acts.[139]

There is a subtle irony in Taruskin referring here to 'canned performances'. Although he acknowledges that '... the advent of recordings has only exacerbated the difficulty of determining the ontological status of musical works', there is a suggestion that he has not quite thought the matter through to its conclusion, not just in this occasional oxymoron cited above, but in his discussions elsewhere of recordings as if they are identifiable performances.[140]

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[139] Taruskin, *Text and Act*, p.24. Taruskin's argument is, broadly put, that that the authenticity movement was a symptom of the same drive towards a reifying formalism that is evident in performance that emphasises (or claims its justification from) purely analytical knowledge.
[140] Taruskin, *Text and Act*, p.14. I have examined the discussion in essay 7 of recordings of a Prokofiev piano piece (see above **Ch.4, pt. 2, Music and Character**).

There is, perhaps, a danger in pursuing a stark opposition between representation – such as the recording as objectified commodity – and processual performance. The danger is that it may over-simplify what has become a complex interaction, where the live, in the form of 'liveness', and the dead intertwine.[141] Perhaps this is not as novel as we might think, as the practice of transcription indicates. Recordings, like transcriptions, interfere with the unitary concept of performance which links a text to an audience on a unique occasion in time and space. Indeed, recordings can be viewed both as a form of, and deviation from, transcription.[142] In a limited historical sense, they even come to replace it. But whereas the transcription was designed to fit an extant piece to a new performer in a new setting, recordings allow players and listeners to do away with the public setting completely. The recording musician is freed from the obligation to perform the work continuously in a fixed location before an audience; instead he can construct at leisure a reified representation of the work. The listener is freed too of the obligation to engage with the whole of the work continuously in the stifling presence of an audience severely restricted in its possible reactions. Performance as a unified field of engagement and communication disappears.

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[141] See Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (London: Routledge, 1999), which discusses this topic in detail; Connor, *Postmodernist Culture*, p.172 makes this point.
[142] For an introduction to the topic of transcription and arrangement, see Millan Sachania, '"Improving the Classics": Some thoughts on the "Ethics" and Aesthetics of Musical Arrangement', *The Music Review*, 55 (1994), 58-75.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Introduction

In this chapter my aim will be to review the arguments already presented and state, where possible, consequences and conclusions of the research project as it stands. It will immediately be clear that this standing is anything but complete. The method by which I intend to proceed is to re-examine key issues which have emerged in the discussion, roughly in the order of their initial presentation, drawing what general conclusions I can. The only divergence is one brief interpolation. The central topics in what follows will thus be the putative 'crisis' in performance studies; the Macintyrean notion of the practice and the role of virtue theory within it; the 'processual' concept of performance I have been putting forward; and the complementary notion of interpretation as a mental representation.

There is one brief interruption to the scheme: after the discussion of the practice I have inserted a brief sketch. It initially touches on the question of how music can be defined, before moving on to a discussion of the topic of musicianship and musicality. This new material serves two purposes. Firstly, it is intended to bridge a gap between the highly abstract discussion of the ethos of the practice and the specifics of performance and interpretation; and secondly, it serves as a pointer to areas which invite further research.

The Crisis in Performance Studies

Two distinct 'crises' have featured in the course of the foregoing, one practical, the other theoretical. Although they are mutually dependent it is convenient, at least initially, to treat them discretely. So I will begin with the former. The historical trajectory I proposed is of a 'double' practice with shifting allegiances. An early phase, starting with the establishment of the familiar Lisztian 'museum' model of the recital/concert, reaches an initial rapprochement in the figure of Busoni, who in weighing the rights of performer

and composer against each other makes their contradictory nature transparent. And it is his skill in a further area – as a writer about musical aesthetics – that grants this moment of history a special profile. Busoni is both synthesiser – simultaneously active as composer, transcriber, performer, aesthetician and critic – and the harbourer of massive contradictions, calling the musical work both earthbound and timeless, and granting performance the status of an artwork in itself, calling it a transcription.[1]

A subsequent phase of the history of musical production and consumption sees the mediator – the performer – lose ground on a number of fronts. Consider this apparently positive fact: more and more of what was once conceived as music for domestic use, to be played, heard and enjoyed in a private, or semi-private setting, has gradually been appropriated for concert use and transformed in the process. The obvious gain in breadth of repertory has a downside. As a consequence, performers find themselves forced to project the sounds of music into much larger spaces than those for which they were originally conceived. A result of this has been changes both in instrument building practice (with an emphasis on even, 'bright' sounds and uniformity in all registers) and more rehearsed, less spontaneous attitudes towards interpretation. Hand in hand with this is the emergence of standardised, ideal public performance spaces, with large concert halls seating up to three thousand or more listeners the norm for orchestral concerts and solo recitals by star performers; and smaller spaces with seats for hundreds, rather than thousands, for chamber music and soloists of lesser repute. All this brings out the similarities of works in performance, at the expense of their uniqueness.

Two further recent aspects of the transformation of practice deserve mention together. They are both closely tied to a perception that classical music can, indeed should, find a wider, 'popular' audience: it should be heard more widely, and pay its way. So attendance figures at concerts of classical music have been more and more closely scrutinised as state involvement in the funding of 'elitist' activities such as the performing arts has been called into question (with the substantial running costs of opera houses in particular a

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[1] See chapter 3, footnote 55.

potential source of embarrassment); and of course performers do not by any means play to regularly full houses. At the same time, the concentration of power in the hands of agents who look after a vanishingly small number of star performers has also lead to a polarisation in the performer market. A few stars command grotesquely large fees, while those at the beginning of their careers are condemned to play for minimal reward. Some commentators are willing to read evolution as issuing in a crisis in practice at this point.[2]

To describe the 'theoretical' aspect of crisis, I have proposed two models.[3] The first is of a closed system of concepts which attempts to shift towards a steady state of equilibrium – and the metaphor of (im)balance which permeates the description above endorses this – and the second describes a notion of proliferation and gradual complication (or its opposite). The former idea captures the polarisation of performer and composer in competing ideals of performance. Goehr's performance model is dialectical, according the work concept an ultimate determining role: the 'perfect performance of music' (i.e. of the work) holds the evanescent 'perfect musical performance' in thrall. As the twentieth century progressed the idealisation of canonised works tended to be reinforced by contemporary compositional practices which were for a long time increasingly radical, exploratory and professionalised, thereby alienating mass audiences, who looked ever more readily to the past.

The metaphor of proliferation and complication is particularly apposite when we come to examine the enormous influence that recording technology has exercised over musical practices during the last one hundred years. Where once the work concept largely determined the relationship of composer to performer and audience, now recordings of various kinds have multiplied the number of cross relationships, forcing us to rethink and reformulate the conceptual net we use to describe this brave new world. In concrete terms, the appearance of recordings is an initially alien, later disruptive and complicating feature within musical practices. The single most important fact to note is that today practically all music heard is recorded or broadcast (or both). Although it

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[2] I mentioned Norman Lebrecht in this regard. See chapter 2, footnote 63.

[3] Chapter 1: **Two Metaphors – an Interlude**.

would be wrong to conclude that live music is dead, it is, in relative statistical terms at least, an endangered species. And of course the 'liveness' of performance in popular music practice has also been substantially eroded through the employment of various forms of electronic intervention and reproduction, such as amplification and simultaneous video presentation. Following on from this, consider how listening habits have acclimatised more and more to the literal repeatability of the recording; how listening to music in the form of recordings has encouraged the fragmentation of both the work as a processual continuity and as a focal occupant of consciousness; how the listener, equipped with new music-reproductive technologies, becomes able to employ music as an accompaniment, or 'soundtrack' for other activities; how the traditional concept of performance as an autonomous, individual act has lost significance as musical production becomes a collaborative act, with professional performers doubling as recording artists, aided by teams of sound engineers.

All this has undoubtedly resulted in a transformation – a distortion, even – of the concepts of performance and interpretation. We must accept that listening to a recording is not by any means the same thing as listening to a performance, even when the recording claims to be 'live'. Interpretation too has changed. It is all too easily thought of as a fully determined, 'reified' take of the work, amenable to recording. Again, I argue that we should resist the equation of a recorded version of a work with a traditional performative interpretation of the kind one encounters in the concert setting. In short, recordings require a whole battery of new concepts to describe their fundamental novelty.

In this discussion of crisis the practical and the theoretical are intimately intertwined. It is ultimately impossible to deal with them sequentially. I will now examine one aspect of their interaction. Although it could reasonably be argued that the traditional practice of concert performance has suffered a loss of 'significance', measured on one standard – the actual numbers of performances past and present – classical music does continue to be performed well and relatively often. Comparing absolute numbers of performances of key works today with those of fifty or a hundred years ago would bear this out. To this

extent at least, the aura of crisis surrounding practice may smack of paranoia. However, the influence of recordings on listening habits has encouraged and amplified certain demands made of performers. The thesis started with the contention that explorations of the concept of historical authenticity were a symptom of performers' disaffection with a strenuously structuralist conception of the musical work; listening to recordings encourages a 'literalist' attitude. As the issue of historical authenticity has gradually in the last decades lost its moral tenor, the musical performance market has segmented along stylistic lines: there is 'mainstream' performance positioned alongside various shades of the 'historically informed'. Both of the resulting niche markets remain subject to the dominance of the work concept as before, while performers in both of them are subject to the same pressures to produce literal note-perfect live performances. Other attempts to escape the dominance of the work concept are effectively at the expense of the practice: 'crossover' artists cross the boundary to the popular. Again, attempts to escape the pressures of literalism – for example by integrating recorded elements into the performance setting as is common practice in popular music – erode the concept of liveness.[4] In all this, the element of uniqueness central to the performance occasion accedes to a desire for a predictable product. Performers become obsessed with risk and loss, rather than opportunity and gain.

In a sense, then, the crisis is in part the unavoidable expression and outcome of attempts to align a 'primary' general category (the musical work), carrier of a 'secondary' category (the performative interpretation) with specific instances valued for their uniqueness (musical performances). This element is not new. It has not changed significantly since Busoni. However, the gradual impingement of technological innovation – particularly recordings – on musical consumption has displaced the site of performance, along with the performer herself and the concept of performance both instantiate. What was once central is now marginal, incidental. This, at least, is one conclusion we might draw.

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[4] The has been a certain resistance to the use of simultaneous video in live classical music concerts, though experimentation is underway. Joanna MacGregor has, for example, performed some of Conlon Nancarrow's player piano studies live using prerecorded tape and video.

There is an alternative view. though it is one I have argued against. A consequence of the dominance of reified notions of music such as the current situation encourages – the 'structures' analysts uncover; the CD, container of a digitally stored, jigsawed simulacrum of 'performance', repeatable infinitely often; the narrow 'literal' interpretations of performers anxious above all to avoid risk – is the tendency to accord *musical performance itself* the status of a reification. One might pursue this line of thought by arguing that the element of uniqueness in performance has shrivelled to mere contingency. All that is significant is representation ('re-presentation'). I regard this as a fundamental error of ontology. More than this, it wipes out a central motive in our listening experience: curiosity for the new. A 'reified' or product-orientated notion of performance, such as that proposed by Said, fails to capture the element of uniqueness we value in the performance occasion. Of course the opposite extreme poses its own problems. What we hear must be intelligible. We must be offered at least the straw of familiarity to clutch at. An over-identification of performance with process tends to take us outside the boundaries of art music practice into the area of experimental music (the later work of Cage, for example) often categorised and discussed as performance art.

Describing the situation as 'critical' loads the discussion with moral values: it is only justified if we wish the traditional practice of processual performance to be preserved. Beyond this, there is the question of what we want 'performance' to stand for in our musical culture. I have already argued that there is no essence of 'performance': it 'is' what the culture chooses to make it. A problem here – to which I return below – is that the concept of performance is now being used in such varied ways that its internal integrity is under threat. I have been at pains to establish a distinction between 'processual' and 'reified' performance partly in response to this. Maintaining it certainly implies, indeed, justifies the description of the current situation as a crisis.

So in our terms, calling the situation a crisis draws attention to a drift too far in favour of one or another extreme (the dialectical model). Or it signals a disorientation in locating practice in relation to these poles (the proliferation and complication model).

The Practice

The term 'practice' has fallen into the discussion almost incidentally. Yet we cannot do without it. The reasons for this are clear. The work concept was for much of the twentieth century respected as a timeless Platonic entity with a claim to universal validity. All music was divisible by the opus. Lydia Goehr's well-known discussion of the work concept redirects attention away from abstraction towards human practice rooted in particularity, subject to both accident and intention, yet exhibiting paradoxically (Busonian) Idealist aspirations. This sea change in perspectives on the musical work necessitates a theoretical explanation of the nature of musical practices, whereby the plural form is further indicative of the fragmentation I spoke of at the end of the first chapter. It would seem that the 'schematic' notated musical work is now the site of a range of competing interpretative/performative practices, each in different ways attempting to fill in gaps of indeterminacy. Analytical practice is one such mode, performance practices (historically informed, mainstream, crossover…) another.

There are many ways of describing practices. In choosing to characterise conventional 'mainstream' art music performance in overtly ethical terms, I endorse an underlying similarity of perspective between Macintyre as a moral theorist and what I referred to above as the Idealist aspiration of this practice. Both share in a celebration of structured autonomous subjectivity. In the case of art music practice this occurs at the primary level of the composer's composition, the secondary level of the performer's interpretation and the tertiary level of audition. In applying the Macintyrean virtue-informed practice to the musical case I claim that the autonomous individual pursues the goods of the practice as ends in themselves at one or another of these three levels. One might dispute the appropriateness of a moral category for composers or listeners (though I think a case – admittedly weaker – can be made here too). The former arguably place too high a value on creative originality, about which attempts to design an ethos are problematic. The latter have the thinnest of obligations,

which in any case can be fulfilled passively. They are free to listen as they wish provided that certain conditions of propriety are met. The practice of art music performers is, however, amenable to the Macintyrean ethical description. because the obligations point in two directions. They are burdened with the Translator's responsibility, as Messengers always vulnerable to criticism or worse.

The role of virtue as prior to any specific practice is an integrating force within the individual's narrative life. But it is not a decisive force in anything less than ideal circumstances. The individual's quest for a unified life-narrative within the Macintyrean conception of virtue-informed practice is fragile and threatened: just as it is in the art music practice I take as its exemplification. In Macintyre's model, a problematic area of second order virtues – flexibility, adaptability, integrity – points to both the potential for individual unity and its disruption. This potential is an ideal. A parallel with the uses and abuses of the concept of unity in music analytical practice suggests itself.

This brings me on to a second feature of the Macintyrean model which is particularly apposite, in view of my larger claims. Within our practice, the understanding of musical works is, I argued, peculiarly similar to our understanding of people. Identifying the animating metaphor of movement and gesture is at the heart of musical understanding. Music appears to us to 'behave' like a person and this is a key to its expressivity. It is also a major part of its appeal to performers in offering them opportunities to reframe themselves in the likeness of an ideal Other.

Intense, passionate desire to re-animate or 'act out' the text is at the heart of art music performance. The problem I identified with Kingsbury's account of conservatory life is its presentation of performers as victims of an irrational system with a self-perpetuating power structure. His notion of a practice is grounded in an (anthropological) analysis of enacted power relations (and contrasted with rhetorical assertions which may run contrary to actions). It is, if you like, an institution-lead analysis. But the question of individual motives is all too easily submerged by a stress on organisational frameworks. Why do people want to become performers? I suggest that aspirants are so strongly

drawn to the possibilities of subjective expression musical performance allows that they are prepared to endure considerable physical hardship and psychic abuse of the kind Kingsbury documents so well. Many welcome, or at least come to accept, the framework of principles I put forward.[5]

Thus for the performer, the practice entails a morality, a system of duties and obligations, rights and wrongs and it is a framework with a certain rigidity. Performers are prepared to be 'second class citizens' because they nonetheless prize the personal rewards highly. The musical work (in Goehr's sense) symbolises a certain notion of the autonomous individual; like the Kantian conception of the moral being, works invite treatment as ends-in-themselves. They resist a simple functional interpretation. Kingsbury's analysis goes to Wittgensteinian lengths to avoid the problematic mental world of beliefs, desires, intentions and abilities. So when he notes that talent is 'a concept frequently used to explain something that couldn't be explained otherwise', its invisibility is cited as cause for scepticism about its very existence.[6] Yet performers apparently believe in this mental world and the morality it makes possible. Virtues are just such problematic inhabitants of the mental realm, and as such open to question. There is no doubt that talent is a key concept in the way performers think of themselves; whether they also think about themselves as 'virtuous' is a matter open to empirical test. If they were found to do so, it would be an indirect endorsement of the aesthetic of 'animation' I mentioned above.

Not all musical practices embody such an ethos of individualism. It has been a common mistake of conventionally trained musicologists to carry over the concept of individual authenticity into areas where its appropriateness is contestable, such as popular music in general, and rock in particular. Nicholas Cook has argued persuasively that rock music practice is characteristically a collaborative enterprise which nonetheless markets itself as a purveyor of

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[5] See Chapter 2, part 2, **Virtues of Pianistic Performance.**

[6] See chapter 2, footnote 31.

authenticity of sorts.[7] Perhaps we might think of the rock star's authenticity as 'iconic' rather than of the structured kind that virtue theory implies: a status conferred, nominal rather than earned. And the extent that the 'star system' has come to dominate contemporary art music performance circles is a measure of the failure of the traditional 'moral' performance culture. We may read this as further evidence of ongoing transformation, or – in a stricter moral vein – as yet one more respect in which the significance of the traditional performance culture is being eroded.

Music, Musicality and Musicianship

In focusing on virtues, I invite an analysis of the performer in terms of characteristics, traits, qualities or properties. Virtues arguably represent an ideal secondary layer, rather distant from the pragmatic day-to-day concerns of the active musician. A major task for the theorist of musical practice is in bridging the gap between the ethos of the practice and a primary layer, its technical specifics. The notion of 'talent' is both too limiting – in its insistence on innateness – and too general, unless we add a disciplinary qualification. The question we will want to ask can be formulated in various ways. What is musical talent, in its innate and learned guises? What are musicianship and musicality? If the question of how musicality and musicianship are linked to virtue has already received an answer, it is a partial one (the set of principles I proposed for performers is intended as a framework). In the following discussion I suggest how it might be extended.

To decide what music is would seem, on the face of it, to be a straightforward matter. We simply list the common traits examples provide. But the search for musical 'universals' has not, on the whole, been fruitful. Suffice it to say that no identifiable element of 'music' is *always* present, though there are significant statistical regularities. For our purposes we will therefore have to

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[7] Nicholas Cook, 'Music minus one: Rock, Theory, and Performance', *new formations: a Journal of Culture/Theory/Politics*, 27 (Winter 1995-6), volume title 'Performance Matters', p.23-41.

remain practice-specific in our definition. If music is defined as a form of behaviour, and more narrowly in our culture as a performing art, the art music practice I have been discussing is narrower still in its reliance on a body of 'works' notated in a highly determinate partitioning system. Musicianship and musicality are what we need to make sense of this.

Francis Sparshott has drawn attention to the problem of musicianship, linking it to the notion of musical understanding:

> [W]hat... is musicianship? What is musical understanding? The question has scarcely been asked, though few terms play more important roles in our critical chitchat than these. The ancient contrast between learned and practical music is one thing that has distracted attention from the concept. One can at least say that a performer shows musicianship by displaying a grasp of musical meanings, both structural and affective, rather than just following the score from point to point. And the meanings must indeed be musical meanings – the affective aspects must be those that are integral to the meaning of the music. Can one specify further? Presumably not: one is speaking rather of the *level* of understanding shown than of any specifiable matter to be understood.[8]

There *have* been efforts to elucidate the nature of musicianship and musical understanding – perhaps Sparshott misleads us here – but the former topic at least has not enjoyed great prominence in academic circles. Of course, it receives ongoing attention from the vast community of music teachers, though their interest is pragmatic rather than systematic in orientation; and psychologists have also investigated these questions. Sparshott's closing comment – that understanding music is measured in degrees, rather than definitively – is congruent with the conclusions I reached in the discussion of musical performance and analysis. In the following attempt to 'specify further' what musicianship and musicality might mean, we will encounter the issue of product and process in an intriguing parallel guise.

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[8] Francis Sparshott, 'Aesthetics of Music: Limits and Grounds', p.84. This passage is also quoted in part in Lydia Goehr, 'The Perfect Performance of Music and the Perfect Musical Performance', in *new formations: a Journal of Culture/Theory/Politics*, 27 (Winter 1995-6), entitled 'Performance Matters', 1-22, (p.13).

I begin with comments by Lydia Goehr, who implies that we think of musicianship and musicality as roughly paralleling technique and style, which are in turn predicated upon rendition and interpretation respectively. She says:

> Certainly, correct rendition and faithful interpretation depend upon knowledge of the work, but performance is more than a demonstration of this knowledge: it is also an *act* of musicianship.[9]

In lining up these oppositional terms – technique/rendition/action against style/interpretation/knowledge – the question arises as to their psychological reality. It turns out that the evidence from cognitive science does indeed support these distinctions. Gilbert Ryle famously drew attention to the heterogeneity of knowledge, distinguishing between 'knowing that' and 'knowing how' (with 'know-how' as the colloquial noun stolen from the verb category to fill a semantic gap).[10]

The cognitive scientist Allen Newell proposed that we think of know-how as a production system. The cognitive universals (i.e. common traits) which occupy production system modellers are as follows:

1. Parallel consideration of possible actions.
2. Serial executions of actions.
3. Distinction between *knowing that* and *knowing how*.
4. Simultaneous learning.[11]

It appears that the mental representation of objects and features is different in kind from the representation of rules. Evidence of this is provided by the fact that in spite of ignorance of rules, behaviour can be rule-driven. For example, people usually apply the rules of their native language correctly although they

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[9] Lydia Goehr, 'The Perfect Performance of Music and the Perfect Musical Performance', p.12.
[10] Ryle, *The Concept of Mind,* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990, first edition 1949) chapter 2, 'Knowing How and Knowing That', p.26-60.
[11] Newell's work is discussed by Christian Schunn and David Klahr in 'Production Systems', in eds. William Bechtel and George Graham, *A Companion to Cognitive Science* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), p.542-551.

generally have little explicit knowledge of what those rules are.[12] The study of brain-damaged patients also supports this view. Much the same can be said of music: listeners do not have to be aware of the rules governing musical organisation (the rules of tonality, say) in order to make sense of it.[13] Listeners may *acquire* (unconsciously) rather than *learn* (consciously) these rules, to use a distinction familiar in linguistics. They may also at a later stage learn about what they have acquired (and the 'adult' discipline of formal musical analysis could be described in these terms). We might call mental representations 'propositional knowledge' (or declarative knowledge' as it is stored in declarative memory) and production itself 'procedural knowledge', reflecting a ubiquitous perspectival difference between product (occupying space) and process (occupying time).

Of course, perception and production cannot be divorced: they are in constant dialogue, with each new production dependent on the *conditions* generated (in part) by previous productions; hence production rules are expressed as 'if-then...' forms. The description of performance as the management and maintenance of a pre-formed interpretation ('running repairs') captures this idea nicely. However, procedural knowledge – physical skill – is slowly learned and rather hard to modify because it is largely automatic. Hence a great deal of what occurs when we perform music is semi-conscious or intuitive. So there are serious limits to conscious management and monitoring in real time. This is a further reason why performances of interpretations tend to be context-dependent and, hence unique to the moment. We can link these ideas to Goehr's two categories of performance: in the 'perfect performance of music', the performer focuses as a priority on the reconstruction from memory of the work, with the interpretation an 'emergent' element; in 'the perfect musical performance', the performer primarily directs attention towards the context in which the performance occurs. The complementary role intuition plays is skewed accordingly.

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[12] Schunn and Klahr, 'Production Systems', p.545.

[13] Malcolm Budd discusses this issue in 'Understanding Music', *The Aristotelian Society*, Supplementary Volume LIX, 1985, p.233-248.

With these considerations in mind, I propose that we think of the relationship between our key terms as follows:

Musicality: the potential (the potential property of sound) in a musical representation (mental, public, or cultural) for music to emerge when musicianship skills are applied in performance (i.e. in real time).

Musicality is thus a latency, an ideal, a value, capable of being more or less realised. It is a property of a representation, and hence can inhere in an external object (e.g. annotated composition, a recording) or an internalised, mental object (such as an interpretation). As such it is a form of propositional knowledge, of 'knowing-that': it is a form of product.

It would seem that human beings have a very broad capacity to perceive musicality in sounds. This is to endorse the Cagean insight that we can hear music in almost any sounds if we so desire. However, it may require considerable patience and strain with opaque, complex materials: here a law of diminishing returns sets in. (There remains the question of sensory limits – of dynamic, duration and so on – which I will leave aside here.) I have argued that we achieve this through metaphorical understanding, with the metaphor of movement/location of seminal importance in our practice.

Musicianship: an individual's system of production which applies (generalised) music-relevant rules to particular instances in the hope of achieving a perfect match.

Musicianship thus involves many things, including perceiving, monitoring – in a sense even inventing – and realising (the degree of) musicality in musical production/performance. It is a form of 'knowing-how'. Further to this, we can say that musicality is only accessible (describable, analysable) through a performative act. Musicianship is that (enabling) quality which constitutes the performative act. In our practice it is primarily (but not exclusively) the sense of hearing – the ear – which is the conduit between musicality and musicianship:

between the mental and physical (i.e. notational) knowledge bases on the one hand and on the other the skills of manipulating the body appropriately.

Thus the distinction between product and process I have used in defining performance turns out to be of value at the level of mind and action. A product – for example, in the form of an interpretation – has the necessary stability to sustain a performance. But it cannot constitute the performance itself, which requires a process of reconstitution in real time. The process of reconstitution is always context-dependent and the result is that performances always differ from each other.

Performance

The link between practice and performance can be stated briefly. I began my chapter on performance by claiming that the former consists of series of the latter. But what is a performance? Let me recall Carlson's description: an 'essentially contested concept', contested partly because it is so widely used. But although there is no ultimate agreement among users as to what performance 'is', a broad semantic framework is specifiable. At the outset of my essay I attempted to specify such a framework, in the awareness that the resulting discussion would contain an element of circularity. I wrote of performance *of* something, *by* someone, *with the aid of* something, *for* a purpose, *in* a setting, *on* an occasion, *for* an observer. Any definition I might propose for art music performance should include both all that is characteristic of practice as well as indicating an underlying congruity with other senses of the term in other practices. It should aim, in other words, for a circularity which avoids viciousness. To talk of musical production in the concert hall as 'performance' is to relativise the meaning of the concept in a certain way. But it is also to point to a continuity with those activities we designate 'performance' in other domains, such as religious observance, speech acts, scientific experiment, and so on, all through the lengthy list I provided.

In that broad framing gesture with which I began, I indicated the rather general level at which continuity is evident. We can summarise it in this way:

performances are particulars, particular instances. They occur at particular times, in particular places. But as I stated at the outset, they contain an element of the familiar, the recycled. A performance is always a performance *of* something. In the case of art music practice, it is performance of several things simultaneously: of a score, of an interpretation and of a work (which is to say, in practical terms, of a composer's intentions as embodied in a score). The stability and specificity of the score lends art music practice a certain rigidity which provoked some of the objections we have encountered.

It may be helpful in coming to terms with this rigidity to invoke Richard Schechner's 'axiom of frames', which, he claims, applies generally in the theatre. I do so with some hesitation: it provides a useful additional perspective, not a scientific law. The 'axiom of frames' states that the looser an outer frame is, the tighter the inner, or, conversely, the looser an inner frame, the more important the outer.[14] Add to this the notion of 'frame recursion' – Minsky's idea that frames can simultaneously function as part of the substance of performance – and we would expect to find looseness and tightness interleaved. It is possible to argue that this is indeed the case: the musical score has a certain tightness, as does the ritual setting of the concert, with its prescriptions of audience behaviour. Between them we find the mental freedoms the listener and the performer necessarily enjoy. Once the problems of reading the score literally have been solved, the performer, insofar as she has the resources she needs, really has no alternative but to arrive at a personal interpretation. And at the risk of over-refining the point here, we could claim that the performer also balances a rather specific, 'tight' notion of musicianship – such as the art music model implies – with a looser set of ethical values. The listener, prescriptions notwithstanding, is free to make of the music what he will.

In the cases of both performer and listener there is no want of models and methods to describe how they go about their activities. For example Salter gives a detailed account of how listeners should (and doubtless often do) listen.[15] But to invoke such models is to reformulate our notion of *what* is

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[14] Richard Schechner, *Performance Theory* (London: Routledge, 1988, revised edition).p.14.
[15] See chapter 1, **Review: (5) The Concert, again**.

performed. In this sense, what counts as the performance is a matter of perspective. What are we taking as our text? Is it the score? A mental representation (the interpretation)? (These are the 'texts' I have focused on.) Or a 'performance' of listening, such as a listener's attempt to reconstruct the musical content? (Here the 'text' might be specified in a theory or typology of listening, such as Salter effectively provides.) And what is the frame within which the text is being performed? Is it the concert hall? Or a domestic setting, listening to broadcast music, or a recording? Here I would refer back to the opening deliberations of this section. Defining performance requires answers to our framing questions concerning agency, setting and so on.

Others might use Schechner to argue differently: that the balance (if such it is) between the loose and tight within our performance practice has been lost. Performance has degenerated into nothing more than a concatenation of reified 'texts'. (I argued against such a view on ontological grounds above.) Where there is a text, there is a stable reference point and the possibility of judgement. Although his might seem to be a convincing rationale for musical competitions, it also renders them self-defeating. An accumulation of texts curtails the freedom of the moment, and the subjective value of musical performance is threatened. The value of Schechner's axiom – unnuanced though it is when stated as a bald opposition – is in reminding us of a need to balance control with freedom. The oppositional terms I have used in this study to characterise this balance have been between product and process. To what extent this pairing names a true opposition or simply relative degrees on a scale is unclear, particularly in the mental realm.

Finally I would like to add a further comment on the 'text' itself. The score – the performer's text – has a relatively stable identity. I have also argued against our regarding it as a performance, choosing instead to classify it as a species of representation. There is nothing to stop us making this recursive move, however, provided we adjust our framework accordingly. The score can be viewed as the outcome of a (series of) compositional 'performances', the product of what is normally a large number of engagements with various drafts, each a kind of performance in itself. Individual musical gestures and details can

certainly be viewed as the 'texts' of a series of essentially private 'secretive' compositional performances. But to speak of such private acts as performances is, as I implied above, to problematise the unity of time, place and action and the location of an audience within it. In this case we drastically *compress* our notion of the performance frame and what counts as a unity of time, place and action along with it.

Reverting to a much larger time scale – the scale of historical epochs binding genres into style – we can usefully think of the production of individual works as performative, as performances of schematic genres (the 'text'), rendered unique in each new composition. In this case, by contrast, we drastically *magnify* our notion of the performance frame and what counts as a unity of time, place and action along with it. Such an altered perspective allows us to see the musical text as consisting of materials which are the outcome of prior compositional performances, with the series of performances of performances stretching backwards (and forwards) in potentially infinite recursion. This enables us in turn to apply the performance model to the Adornian theory of 'mediation'. Musical materials, far from being neutral givens, contain a sediment of historical meanings. In performative terms, unpicking these meanings is a matter of separating individual performances from each other: it becomes an 'exfoliation' of previous representations.

If such a project seems chimerical, it is because we can only chase down the 'text' of a performance where a material record survives. We cannot know precisely what was in a composer's mind when he was working on a particular composition or what models he consciously took as guides. From our perspective the question as to whether a generic reference was consciously intended or accidental is often unanswerable. We can only weigh the evidence of circumstance and 'reconstruct' on the basis that beliefs and desires – compounded as intentions – are common to all compositional endeavour.

A theory may require intentions – and the mental representations that underlie them – to exist, but determining their ontological status is a currently insoluble problem. What the evidence suggests is that the inhabitants of the mental realm are characterised by fuzziness in form. Memory is not a matter of immutable representation, but of reconstruction. As such, it is an unreliable process and we may vacillate between readings, particularly when we scrutinise our intentions closely, outside of the constraints of real time performance.

The materials of a musical interpretation are fragmentary and unfinished. They need not be, or have been, consciously pondered. What we might have once reflected upon may have long since disappeared below the threshold of consciousness. In other words, what we currently *know* as performers of music – what propositional knowledge we have of the music we play – may be rather limited. What is important in real time is not 'knowing-that', but 'knowing-how'. Hence the analytical knowledge a performer feels she needs varies: it is very much a matter of degree. Intuitive understandings which deny explanation are commonplace. A performer may find herself in much the same position as the non-specialist, unable to explain why a musical gesture has the effect on her it does: she may understand without being able to explain how she does so. What this implies is a need to reconsider what the umbrella of analysis covers. I suggest we think in terms of a spectrum of values, with detailed formal analysis at one end, partial, informal 'ad hoc' simplifications in the middle, and the various metaphorical understandings of music (including music understood in terms of virtual movement) at the other.

For all that, the repertoire art music performers are centrally concerned with is designed to counter fuzziness and fragmentation. Dahlhaus argues this point persuasively, contrasting the solidified, quasi-spatial image of composed works with the moment-to-moment sensitivity to context that drives free improvisation. As he puts it: 'Composition tends towards objectivity:

improvisation is mere execution'.[16] Interpretation only becomes possible when an executive encounters a compositional object. So interpretations aspire towards representation but nonetheless, in the moment of their realisation in real time – in performance – they retain an improvisatory element. An interpretation thus throws together an idealised aesthetic content with a psychological element.

'The Music of the Music…'

I would like in closing to glance briefly at an idea presented by Edward Said, who derives it in turn from Proust. 'The music of the music' is, in effect, the concentrate of a musician's appreciation of music, an accumulation of individual associations, insights, manners and address:

> a... unique sound not only as a distinctive imprint, something like a signature or stamp of particular possession, but also as a special theme, personal obsession, or recurrent motif in the work of an artist that gives all of his work its own recognizable identity.[17]

Said is suggesting that there are as many musics as there are (great) composers; we might extend his notion to include performers, analysts, or indeed anyone whose involvement is deep and long-standing enough to acquire such potential resonance. Establishing origins is about finding commonality. We are contemplating the opposite end of the tree of musical evolution where it is the utter peculiarity of individual experience that counts. This essence of individuality is only accessible in private. Redolent of intimacy and solitude, it is, Said suggests, nonetheless an affirmation, a communion.

Said's examples focus on 'melody', his translation of Proust's 'air de la chanson', and he pursues both the literal and figurative implications of the term. Most strikingly he manages to forge a link between the idea of the composer's personal imprint, a technical aspect of music itself and both personal and

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[16] Carl Dahlhaus, trans. Derrick Puffett and Alfred Clayton, *Schoenberg and the New Music*, p.223.

historical circumstance. So it is with the late works of Beethoven (Diabelli variations), Bruckner (Ninth Symphony) and, most appositely, Richard Strauss (Metamorphosen), that he illustrates his argument. If we accept the idea that music is a potential which a listener realises – and each listener differently – it is of ethical, almost political, significance that Said, a listener (and performer) of eclectic tastes, should favour musics which, in the manner of 'Metamorphosen', 'exfoliate':

> ... I am intellectually impressed by the richness of what I have called the alternative formation in music, in which the non-linear, nondevelopmental uses of theme or melody dissipate and delay a disciplined organisation of musical time that is principally combative as well as dominative.[18]

There is a readily interpretable subtext to Said's sentiments here which I would like to put aside. However, the notion of layers of meaning implied by 'the music of the music' is vividly suggestive. The musical performance I have been considering involves at least three individuals and contains at least three levels: the composer's composition, its interpretation by the performer and each unique performance it receives in front of an audience. The end point of encounter, the musical performance, is the vehicle of a recursive 'music of the music of the music…'.

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[17] Edward Said, *Musical Elaborations* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1991), p.92-3.
[18] Said, *Musical Elaborations*, p.102.

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